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Kent on Sunday

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Landlord fury over 'curry' smell ban

Fergus Wilson faces legal threat but denies he is racist

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Little wonder teachers look frazzled right now

BEING a teacher in this day and age is not quite the voyage of non-stop inspiring the next generation the TV advertisements would have you believe.

The reality is long hours, poor resources and an internal monitoring programme which is relentless and most definitely not for the faint of heart.

Little wonder, then, that education professionals get a little prickly if you suggest their days ends at the final bell and they're lucky to get the holidays they do. Yes, they're long, but if you know one, most are almost falling over through fatigue by the time these Easter holidays get under way.

But if you want to make them look really edgy, ask them about what it's like when Ofsted comes to town. And if you want to see a normally self-assured and confident headteacher break into a sweat, simply say there are reports they're in the area.

It's not quite like Basil Fawlty when the hotel inspectors arrive in Torquay, but there are elements you can recognise.

Firstly, let's be clear. Inspecting schools reasonably regularly is fundamentally a good thing. We want our schools to be aiming to be the best, and knowledge of external review ensures they cannot stagnate.

Yet the hit-and-run approach of an Ofsted visit fails, many would argue, to properly appreciate the ethos of a school or the effectiveness of teachers. And should that two-day visit go badly, well it can spell the end of previously impressive careers and forever tarnish a school's reputation.

Inside our special education supplement this week we take a look at some of the concerns - if you're not too familiar with Ofsted reports and how they are perceived in the profession, it's well worth a read.

Editor **Chris Britcher**

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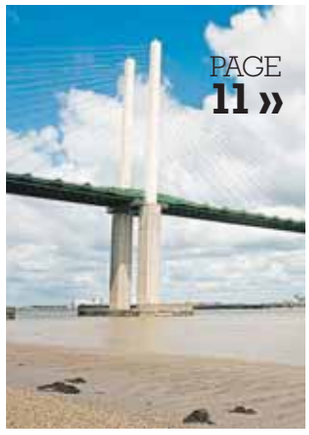

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'Militaristic' Bluewater jewellery raiders jailed

By Luke May
luke.may@archant.co.uk

SMASHED: Breitling store at Bluewater was subjected to a raid in June 2016 and £264,900 of watches stolen

A KEY figure in a gang which staged a daring raid on a Bluewater jewellers, which saw a car set on fire and the shop windows smashed with sledgehammers before loot worth more than £260,000 was pinched, has this week been jailed.

Cosmin Muraru, 25, from Birmingham, was part of the gang which went on the rampage in the Greenhithe shopping complex in June 2016.

The offenders drove to the shopping centre in a silver Ford Mondeo and, after parking on the middle level of the Thames Walk car park, set it on fire to serve as a distraction.

Once entry had been made to the shopping centre, six men were seen using sledgehammers to force open the Breitling store's glass shopfront.

They then climbed through the glass and systemically destroyed cabinets before filling bags with watches. They fled the area on foot. However a black hooded top found on a footpath off Hedgerow Road provided a DNA match for Muraru.

The gang had caused more than £60,000 worth of damage to the shop and made off with watches worth £264,900.

He was subsequently arrested and charged by officers from Staffordshire Police on September 21.

Police then discovered the Bluewater attack was part of an ongoing series of crimes that spanned 11 different towns and cities between November 2015 and September 2016. Locations included Milton Keynes, Oxford, Stoke-on-Trent, Basingstoke, Portsmouth, Bicester, Derby, Stratford-upon-Avon, Peterborough and Blackburn. In total the gang had conspired to steal more than £3.1m from jewellers.

Muraru pleaded guilty to conspiracy to burgle and was sentenced at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court on Thursday.

In total, he was sentenced to six years seven months for conspiracy to commit burglaries and 18 months for conspiracy to commit arson.

A further six gang members received similiar sentences after appearing at the court earlier in the month.

A detective constable said: "The offences these men committed were brazen and well organised in an almost militaristic fashion.

"This meant that a complex and diligent investigation, involving nine police forces was needed to secure these convictions."

'I blame myself' says husband after wife died due to hospital blunder

THE husband of a young mother who died just hours after she gave birth to her second son has said he continues to place blame on himself.

Frances Cappuccini's death was a result of "failures, inadequate diagnosis and treatment" at the hospital caring for her, a coroner said earlier this year.

The 30-year-old died at the Tunbridge Wells Hospital at Pembury, shortly after giving birth to her son, Giacomo, by Caesearean section.

Mrs Cappuccini, a school teacher, suffered heavy bleeding and was anaesthetised, but went into cardiac arrest and died at 4.20pm on October 9 2012.

Speaking this week, her husband Tom Cappuccini said: "I placed a lot of blame - I still do - a lot of blame on myself for not being more forceful, more aggressive with the midwives when I first got there and insisting more that we had the C-section.

"So to then imagine her waking up and being unable to breathe by herself and being conscious at the time for me - oh my God - I can't even put into words how that made me feel.

"So to have them at the inquest tell me there is no way she could have woken up has just taken so much off my shoulders."

He added: "I would have done anything for her. I would happily change it - I would do anything to change what has happened, absolutely anything."

Reflecting on being told his wife had died, Mr Cappuccini said: "It was devastating. It completely ripped me apart. I think my first reaction - I nearly passed out. I think I fell on the floor."

The 10-day inquest at Gravesend earlier this year heard that Mrs Cappuccini lost more than two litres of blood after the C-section.

She was subsequently operated on for a postpartum haemorrhage but never woke up from the anaesthetic.

The inquest criticised the care given to her, including a piece of placenta that was left in her womb.

Air ambulance plans to fly out of Marden and into Rochester

KENT's air ambulance is set to move its operational base from Marden to Rochester Airport.

A planning application was submitted to Medway Council after bosses at the charity, which also operates in Surrey and Sussex, said the current site was no longer viable.

If approved, it would mean relocating 30 staff to a new office block which would accommodate 14 additional staff members plus six visiting pilots and crew.

A 24/7 service is offered by the charity but Marden is not configured for night flying and therefore night-time operations are conducted from Redhill instead. Additionally, its current two helicopters are in the process of being replaced for larger rotorcraft which would not fit at the existing base.

Coroner: Masood's family are victims of attacks too

WESTMINSTER terror attacker Khalid Masood was killed by a single gunshot to his chest, an inquest has been told.

Masood, 52, who was born in Dartford and went to school in Tunbridge Wells, was shot dead by an armed police officer after gaining access to the Palace of Westminster grounds during his March 22 attack in the heart of London.

Senior coroner Dr Fiona Wilcox at Westminster Coroner's Court adjourned the hearing but not before saying: "I take a moment to pass my sympathies to the family of Masood, who are also all victims of this incident."

The terrorist's mother, Janet Ajao, said she was "deeply shocked and saddened" by her son's actions.

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Stories which made the headlines @kentnews.co.uk during the past week

MP's aide in court over Westminster rape case

SOUTH Thanet MP Craig Mackinlay's aide has appeared in court charged with two counts of rape following an alleged incident at the Palace of Westminster.

Samuel Armstrong, 23, from Danbury in Essex, is also charged with sexual assault in relation to the alleged attack in October last year.

Armstrong, who has been suspended as chief of staff to Mr Mackinlay since the allegations emerged, wore a suit and spoke only to confirm his name, date of birth and address during the hearing at Westminster Magistrates' Court on Friday.

He was bailed to appear at Southwark Crown Court on April 28 and ordered not to enter the Palace of Westminster or contact his alleged victim.

Carl's killer sentenced to life after fatal attack over a post on social media

By Tom Pyman
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A 27-year-old has been sentenced to life behind bars after being found guilty of murder in a car park close to the Westwood Cross shopping centre in a row over a post on social media.

A jury at Maidstone Crown Court found John Dickson, formerly of Northdown Road, Cliftonville, guilty of killing Carl Gregory, 20, of Broadstairs after holding him in a choke hold. He had denied the charges.

The judge ruled that he will serve at least 18 years behind bars before being considered for release.

The jury heard how a friend of Mr Gregory's had fallen out with him over a social media post, and that she had asked another man to speak to him about it.

He arranged to meet Mr Gregory at the shopping centre and took Dickson with him.

A fight broke out between the man and Mr Gregory, which led to Dickson becoming involved and placing Mr Gregory in a choke hold.

VICTIM: Carl Gregory

The victim was also kicked while he was on the ground.

An ambulance was called after Mr Gregory's body was discovered by workers who were leaving nearby shops, but he was declared dead at the scene.

The cause of his death was later recorded as compression of the neck.

Dickson was arrested at his home address later the same evening. He denied the charge.

Detective sergeant Ross Gurden said: "This was a tragic death of a popular young man who had his whole life in front of him.

"Carl Gregory is sorely missed by his family and friends due to the actions of John Dickson, who went out of his way to confront him.

"I hope this outcome is of comfort to all those who loved Carl.

"I hope this case reinforces the message that the use of violence to resolve issues can result in life changing consequences.

"Dickson is a young man who will now serve a considerable length of time behind bars as a result of a complete disregard of the consequences of his actions.

A second man who was also charged with Mr Gregory's murder was found not guilty by the jury.

CLUE: It's not the waxwing

Can you guess most popular bird in Kent?

THE number of collared doves seen in Kent's gardens have dropped dramatically, according to the RPSB's latest mass participation birdwatch.

But the goldfinch and robin are on the rise, and there were a number of waxwings - usually only seen once every seven to eight years - spotted as they fled a harsh continental winter..

Close to half-a-million people joined in the world's largest garden wildlife survey counting more than eight million birds during the 38th RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, which calls on people around the UK to monitor the birds they see in their garden during a one hour period. The event was held over the last weekend in January.

Kent's most common garden bird is the house sparrow with an average of five recorded in about two thirds of all the gardens surveyed in the county.

Starling and blackbird took the second and third places respectively.

The county is losing its collared doves though; their numbers have dropped 30 per cent since 2007. The colourful goldfinch, however, has seen its numbers swell 57 per cent over the decade.

The county's blue tits and great tits saw their numbers drop 19 per cent and 16 per cent respectively compared with last year.

Oval chalet row costs city taxpayers £200k

MORE than £200,000 of taxpayers' money has been spent defending the controversial decision to sell a plot of land, Canterbury City Council has revealed.

The sale of the Oval Chalet site in Whitstable has been the subject of much discussion, with some campaigners believing the local authority sold the land at a fraction of its true value.

As a result, the council has racked up a six-figure sum in legal costs and officer time in defending its decision.

The Whitstable Society (WS) has recently confirmed it will seek permission to appeal the recent decision of a judge not to quash the contract with the developer and to challenge other parts of the judgment - a decision on which is expected soon.

The council's chief executive Colin Carmichael said: "We accept the judge's findings that we did not get the best price we could have got for the land and apologise to residents for that."

MP wades into row over 135% price rises

MP Craig Mackinlay has slammed Thanet District Council's decision to hike up car parking charges by 135 per cent in some areas.

In places such as Minnis Bay, near Birchington, popular car parks for beach access will rise from £1.70 an hour to £4 with daily daily charges rising from £8.50 to £12. The charges come into effect from April 1. Now the South Thanet MP has hit out at the decision by the local authority.

Sarah Melmoth, owner of Joss Bay Leisure, said "The new charges are higher than the well-known hotspots of Cornwall. In Perranporth charges are £1 per hour and £6.60 for a whole day."

The MP said: "Our beaches are one of our greatest assets and should be for everyone to enjoy at a reasonable cost. Yet by raising parking charges and not improving facilities, business owners will feel they are being punished."

The council says the increases were introduced after "an extensive review" of parking provision across the district.

Comic Relief cash is open for applications

ORGANISERS of last week's Comic Relief event are calling on groups in Kent to get in touch in order to reserve a slice of the £50,000 pot that has been ring-fenced for use by groups across Kent, Surrey and Sussex.

The charity event took place across last weekend and raised a total of £73,026,234.

Kent will see an average of around £17,000 to go around various community organisations that have to apply for money online.

Each grant is relatively small, so plenty of organisations could get a slice of the pie.

Comic Relief said: "We are urging local community projects in the south east to apply for a grant."

"Comic Relief community Ccsh grants of £500 to £1,000 are available to small organisations doing great work to help local people living tough lives.

"Applications are open now, with the Community Foundations for Kent working with Comic Relief to get the cash to the groups that need it most.

Interested groups can apply by going to www.kentcf.org.uk.

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Dreamland gets extra £10m but opening delayed a month

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

THE hotly anticipated re-opening of Margate's leisure complex Dreamland has been pushed back by almost a month.

Originally scheduled to welcome the public on April 28, bosses have now announced the doors will open on Friday, May 26, but with a host of new improvements to help create a sustainable seaside entertainment park.

A further £10m cash injection by Cayman Island-registered firm, Arrowgrass - bringing its total investment up to £25m to safeguard the park's future - means Dreamland will now feature wi-fi across the park, a treetop bar, a 15 metre festival-style bar and an expanded street food dining offering.

This is all in addition to the newly restored vintage rides, event spaces and interactive art installations announced in February.

The plans also include investment into Dreamland's back of house areas, including specific facilities for artist-led events such as green rooms and catering, with a new state of the art industrial kitchen which will service both the Hall By The Sea and Ballroom for large catered events, bringing multi-functional use to the event spaces.

The Cinque Ports pub project has also expanded, with well over a million pounds being invested to upgrade two floors of the Grade II listed building, returning it to its former 1930s glory.

IMPROVED: But many will be disappointed it will not re-open now until May 26

Following recent acquisitions, Sands Heritage Limited, operator of Dreamland Margate, now owns land and buildings across a 60 metre stretch of Marine Terrace opposite Margate's beach.

Steven Mitchell, interim CEO at Dreamland Margate, said: "We are accelerating some elements of our longer-term plan in order to deliver the best possible experience to our customers in 2017 and to avoid potential future disruption by doing the work in one go.

"To complete the additional improvements, and ensure the fantastic day or night out for customers from the get-go, we have decided to change the opening date for the amusement park by a few weeks to May 26 and we are excited about what we will offer for the Spring Bank Holiday and the school half-term."

Manor re-opens after £8m renovation work

EASTWELL Manor officially re-opens next month after undergoing an £8million renovation.

The historic Edwardian estate on the outskirts of Ashford, was acquired on a 99-year lease by spa specialists Champneys last year who took over management in November.

The newly-refurbished Eastwell Manor Spa Hotel opens to the public for the first time on Friday April 14.

Cop pleads guilty to indecent images

A KENT police officer will be sentenced on April 26 after pleading guilty to three counts of distributing indecent images.

Timothy Neville Ryton, 45, of Folkestone, also pleaded guilty to two charges of voyeurism, two counts of taking indecent photos, and two of distribution of indecent images.

Home is 'outstanding'

A CHILDREN's home run by Medway Council has been rated 'outstanding' in all categories by Ofsted.

The Old Vicarage, which was established in April 1996, provides residential care for up to eight young people.

The children's home was rated as good in March 2016, and outstanding after February's visit.

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Rival head takes over city's top selective girls' grammar

DR MATTHEW Baxter, head teacher of Simon Langton Boys' School, has been appointed as interim executive head of Simon Langton Girls' School in what many will interpret as the start of a move to unite the two selectives.

His appointment follows the resignation of Jane Robinson earlier this month after nine years in charge. She quit after a report into the handling of efforts to create a multi-academy trust.

Kent County Council and the board of governors confirmed the appointment will run until the end of the next school year in summer of 2018 and Dr Baxter will remain as executive head teacher of the Langton Boys' School.

A KCC spokesman said: "Dr Baxter has led the boys' school for 16 years and is Canterbury's longest serving secondary head teacher. He will support the improvement of the girls' school whilst also working to build upon the strong and productive links between the two schools which have both remained under local authority control and share a common endowment fund relating back to their joint foundation in 1881."

Faith study centre goes on the market for £3.5m

A MAJOR study centre in Canterbury has gone on the market - with a price tag of £3.5 million.

The Franciscan International Study Centre announced it was to close after 46 years in the city and is moving out of its site in Giles Lane on June 30.

Now the site, adjacent to the University of Kent campus and St Edmund's School, is being sold by agnets the BTF Partnership.

Built in the 1970s in grounds of three acres, the complex includes a main building of over 15,000 sq ft, housing a substantial library, offices and meeting rooms, a common room, refectory and kitchen.

There are also five residential blocks providing a total of 43 bedrooms, most with en-suite facilities; each block having a communal sitting room and kitchen.

The centre had run an ecumenical training programme which "develops the skills and experience of spiritual direction for those who feel called to accompanying others in their journey of faith".

William Hinckley, director at BTF Partnership said: "With less than 23 per cent of the city's students housed in university accommodation, Canterbury is considered a top investment opportunity student accommodation and this occupies an ideal location next to the university."

The board of trustees of the Franciscan International Study Centre announced in December it was to close.

Hottest day since 2012

PARTS of Kent enjoyed their hottest March day in years on Thursday as temperatures soar to 21.8C.

Gravesend now holds the record for the warmest day in March since 2012. The weather is not set to last however with cloud this weekend.

Council chief steps down

JOHN Cubitt stepped down as leader of Gravesham Borough Council on Friday due to ill health.

He will remain councillor for Meopham North but his health is unlikely to improve sufficiently for him to resume his duties as leader in the forseeable future.

Doorstep caller warning

POLICE are warning of a doorstep criminal knocking on doors in the Elham area offering to clean moss from driveways or roofs.

He is described as very persistent, around 19 years old, medium build with short brown curly hair and spoke with an Irish accent.

Sun Baby's dance move

STUDENT Jessica Smith, 21, from Chatham - the original Sun Baby in the Teletubbies - plans to follow in the footsteps of the characters by teaching dance to children.

When she leaves Canterbury Christ Church she intends to teach dance in primary schools.

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Tycoon faces 'race' action

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

PROPERTY tycoon Fergus Wilson is facing legal action over a policy in which he banned "coloured" tenants, fearing they would make his homes "stink of curry".

The controversial millionaire refused to deny making a list of requirements for tenants in an email to a letting agent, but said it was "some time ago".

Mr Wilson, who last year failed in a bid to run for the role of Kent's police and crime commissioner, said the controversy started when he bought a house in Ashford at a discounted price because of a strong smell of curry.

"I said when I bought it that within six months it'd be sorted but we just could not get rid of the bloody smell - it absolutely stank of curry," he told KoS.

"The carpets had to come up and the whole job meant throwing £12,000 down the drain."

Mr Wilson then bought another house nearby but said a mixed-race family left the house smelling of curry at the end of their tenancy. It was a case of once bitten, twice shy," he said.

"Yes, I accept not every individual coloured person likes and eats curry but I think a high proportion do and I had to go on probabilities."

CONTROVERSIAL: Fergus Wilson admits he banned 'coloured' tenants for fear of making his houses 'stink'

When challenged on the use of language many would find offensive, he responded: "I use the term 'coloured' because it's quicker and easier than saying 'people from India, people from Africa and people who are Arabic'.

"To anybody who says I'm racist, I've just employed a coloured person."

This is not the first time Mr Wilson, 70, has been in the public eye for discriminating against potential tenants, having banned single mums, battered wives, plumbers and low income earners from renting his homes in the recent past.

"As long as their money is green, we're happy to have them," he said. "But if the same situation happened again tomorrow, I would say the same thing, because I was being practical."

His comments were referred to the Equality and Human Rights Commission by the Hope Not Hate group.

Chief executive Rebecca Hilsenrath described Mr Wilson's remarks as "truly disgusting" and added: "Unless we are satisfied that he will not commit unlawful acts in the future we will take legal action."

Peaches death 'no surprise'

THE widower of Peaches Geldof has said he was "not surprised" when he found her body after a heroin overdose.

Thomas Cohen, the father of Geldof's two sons, described the moment he discovered her body at their home in Wrotham in a rare interview on German TV. He said: "When I found her, I was not surprised. I thought to myself at the moment, 'Yes of course - you had to do that'. The routine I had to keep up with the children helped me a lot."

Peaches grew up in Faversham with her father - Live Aid hero Bob Geldof.

Tesco Express blaze drama

AN INVESTIGATION has been launched after 20 firefighters were called to a blaze at the Tesco Express in Ashford just after midnight on Friday.

Crews spent over three hours tackling the fire just off Hythe Road. Residents were asked to keep doors and windows closed as a precaution until crews left at 3.30am.

Police say the cause of the fire is thought to be deliberate.

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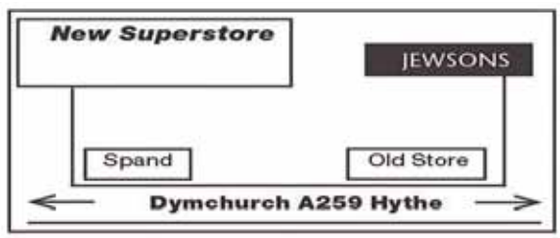

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ROW: The Dart Charge system has made the QEII Bridge, above, a lot of money, but with much of it coming through penalties, and congestion still a problem, has it actually eased locals' woes?

Calls grow for £57m profits from crossing to be reinvested locally

Tom Pyman gauges reaction to huge figures revealed in the Dartford Crossing's annual accounts

A THIRD of the fees collected by highways chiefs for journeys between Kent and Essex using the Dartford Crossing last year is through penalties, new figures have revealed.

Income from use of the crossing in the 2015/16 financial year totalled some £161.6m - a rise of £61.8m from the previous 12 months - according to accounts published this week.

And of that, some £53.1m - around a third - was enforcement income, collected from road users who have been slapped with fines for using the crossing but failing to make a payment within the required timescale.

Chiefs say the increased use of those enforcement management measures introduced through the Dart Charge scheme, first implemented in place of toll booths in 2014, is a major reason for the rise since last year.

An increased number of crossings between the counties has also been cited as a reason, with the number of journeys up eight per cent on the year before.

"Whilst the increase during charging hours was 7.3 per cent, the increase outside of charging hours was 13.5 per cent, suggesting that the charging scheme is successfully encouraging people to make journeys at less busy times," the report said.

Profit also rose with revenue, with proceeds for the year ending March 31, 2016 totalling £57.2m compared to £12.2m the previous year.

Those profits go straight back into a Department for Transport pot, however leader of the Labour group on Dartford Borough Council, Jonathon Hawkes, told KoS the cash should instead be re-invested in improving roads approaching the crossing and in the surrounding area locally.

"It's making an enormous amount of money and Dartford needs to see more of that," he said.

"Local government budgets are being squeezed, yet this huge source of income isn't available to us, which is completely unreasonable.

"We see the pain in Dartford but not the benefit, and our MP and local council should be saying to the government 'let's see some return'.

"The crossing itself isn't so much the problem - although the tunnels will soon need to be looked at and upgraded - it's the local road network."

In response to Cllr Hawkes' comments, a DfT spokesperson said: "We are delivering the biggest investment in our roads in a generation, and as part of this Kent County Council is receiving nearly £32m in 2017-18 to fix roads and fill potholes.

"We are also due to make a decision on a new Lower Thames Crossing in due course, which will help relieve congestion at the Dartford Crossing."

Cllr Hawkes questioned whether the Dart Charge system had improved the issue of congestion at the crossing but insisted there was little excuse for drivers who hadn't paid to use the two tunnels taking traffic into Essex, or the QEII Bridge bringing cars over to Kent.

"We're told that journey times are improving and while that may be correct on a technical measure, local people are still suffering tailbacks and snarl-ups," he said.

"There will always be people who are unaware, or who think they can get away with it, but they shouldn't be, the signs are very clear.

"There were clearly a lot of administrative problems when Dart Charge first came in and those problems are now not as bad as they have been, but we're still talking about a lot of money.

Figures could have been even higher, but the accounts reveal the gross value of penalty charge notices (PCN) cancelled, or never charged, is £33.6m.

Highways England says it maintains a deliberate policy of leniency towards first time offenders, whereby a 'warning letter' accompanies the first PCN.

This contains an offer for the penalty to be cancelled if the initial user charge is paid within 14 days.

Taking that into account, the report claims £8.8m has been lost by not issuing valid PCNs over the course of the year, which was blamed on teething problems at the start of the new freeflow payment system.

"For the first six months of the year, issues with the new systems supporting Dart Charge, as implemented, meant that the data held to support statutory enforcement activity was not complete and accurate," the report said.

"As a result, Highways England decided to freeze or abandon the issue of PCNs to certain customers during this period."

However, auditors added that those early issues have now been "substantially resolved".

A decision on the location of the new crossing was due last week, according to sources.

However, an announcement is now not expected until the conclusion of KCC's elections in May, due to purdah - a period of time before an election that prevents government from making announcements about initiatives which could sway voters.

Dartford MP Gareth Johnson said: "Overall the number of vehicles using the Dartford Crossing is going up and this highlights the need for another crossing over the Thames away from Dartford.

"There was always going to be a period of time during which people got used to the Dart Charge system.

"Although there is now greater understanding of the system, the road layout is still fairly confusing on the approach to the tunnels.

"Improvements are needed and I hope Highways England will continue their work to solve this issue."

A Highways England spokesman said: "Dart Charge is the first scheme of its kind in the UK, and has been delivered successfully.

"This is the first set of accounts covering a full year of Dart Charge operation, and within the accounting periods there has been substantial progress in addressing these issues.

"Compliance with the scheme is high, and enforcement is being carried out effectively, fairly and appropriately."

100 years since Tontine St bomb

Folkestone suffered one of the worst First World War air bombing raids in 1917 with dozens killed and more than a hundred injured when German bombers ditched their deadly arsenal over the town

By Chris Murphy
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

THE Great War's largest loss of civilian life to a single aircraft bomb is being marked in Folkestone with a major ceremony - organised by a victim's great granddaughter.

On May 25, 1917, a squadron of German Gotha bombers inflicted an appalling attack as it prepared to fly off back over the Channel.

Having returned from a raid above London, the bombers looked to offload their remaining deadly cargo on the county. First it dropped weapons on Ashford, killing one and injuring two, before continuing to drop bombs in Hythe, Cheriton and Shorncliffe.

But it was to be Folkestone that suffered the biggest loss by the time the day of horror ended.

Margaret Care's great grandfather William Stokes ran Stokes Greengrocer in Tontine Street with his brothers at the time.

It was right outside the shop that the bomb fell at 6.20pm.

She told us: "On that fateful date in 1917, Folkestone became the final drop of the evening and it caused carnage in Tontine Street.

"It is still hard to believe today, but a single bomb killed a total of 63 people, mainly women and children.

"This was to go down in history as the largest number of civilians killed by one bomb in the First World War."

Now she is organising a remembrance service in the town on May 25 this year to mark the 100th anniversary - to be followed by the unveiling of a plaque engraved with the names of the 81 civilians killed that day.

In addition to the 63 killed in Tontine Street - 10 men, 28 women and 25 children - 18 other civilians died as bombs hit elsewhere in the town. In total, more than 100 were injured.

Among the dead was William Stokes, 46 and his son Arther, 14. Frederick Stokes, 41, was injured and died the following year having never recovered.

Mrs Care said: "You can only imagine the terrible scenes that day. I have known about this event my whole life and every year, a member of the family has laid flowers at the scene.

"Over the years the job has been passed down and it has been my privilege to do it today."

Mrs Case firmly believes the bombing of Folkestone was an error. She told us: "I can't prove it, no one can, but I can't help thinking the pilots really meant to drop the last of their bombs in the sea."

Historian Martin Easdown has written books about the fateful day.

He told us: "The First World War showed the home population that the horrors of war would no longer be confined to a far-away foreign field and civilian casualties were to be caused by German battle cruisers, and subsequently by attack from the air by Zeppelins and aircraft.

"Following the shooting down of a number of Zeppelins in 1916, the Germans produced a large Gotha bomber to continue the raids. In early 1917, a squadron of Gothas was formed under the command of Ernst Brandenburg, known as KAGOHL III or 'Englandgeschwader' - England squadron.

"Four airfields were laid out for the aircraft in Belgium and by May 1917 everything was in place for the first raid.

"At 2pm on Friday, May 25, 1917, 23 Gothas took off with the intention of bombing London, although two soon returned home.

"However, as the planes neared the capital, they found it was hidden under a dense layer of cloud up to 7,000 feet. Brandenburg signalled for the squadron to turn south east into Kent where they followed the South Eastern and Chatham Railway's main and largely straight line to the Channel ports.

"A number of bombs were dropped close to the line and upon reaching Ashford the railway works were targeted. All six bombs missed the works and fell in residential streets, killing one person. The bombers then continued east and 16 bombs were dropped on Hythe killing two, including the verger of the parish church.

"Onward the planes flew to Shorncliffe Camp and Cheriton, where a number of bombs fell upon soldiers at the camp pitching tents and preparing for a march.

"Seventeen Canadians and one British soldier were killed and there were three further fatalities in Cheriton, two of them children.

"The Gothas flew on to Folkestone which, despite having a large military presence, was woefully unprepared for an enemy attack by air. There was no air raid warning system or anti-aircraft guns for protection.

"A sunny spring early evening had enticed many to venture outside, and being payday, the shops in the High Street and Tontine Street were busy supplying their customers for the weekend.

"Just after 6pm a number of distant explosions were heard that gradually increased in volume. However no one was duly alarmed, suspecting the sounds were of training exercises at Shorncliffe Camp. The Gothas were still aiming for the railway but all the bombs fell in the nearby streets. Three people lost their lives in the West End and Central Station areas and another in the Foord district. A cook was killed in Manor Road when a house received a direct hit, and an explosion outside 19 and 21 Bouverie Road East wrecked both buildings and caused the death of five people.

"Sadly, the carnage in Bouverie Road East proved to be just the prelude to a far greater tragedy when a single bomb falling in Tontine Street killed 63 people in the most horrific manner. A sizeable queue had formed outside Stokes greengrocery store after word had got round that a precious consignment of potatoes had been delivered. By this stage of the war many foodstuffs were getting difficult to obtain.

"The majority of the queue consisted of women, many accompanied by small children, a number of whom were happily playing in the early-evening sunshine. Then, in an instant, a bomb exploded outside the shop, sending the roof crashing down on the people inside and filling the street with the most dreadful scene imaginable. A total of 44 people were killed instantly and a further 17 later died in local hospitals.

"Severed heads and limbs, mangled horse carcasses and rubble from wrecked shops lay about the street, while a huge sheet of flame from a fractured gas main shot out from the pavement.

"The raiders flew on towards Dover, but at last they began to encounter some serious home defence from gun batteries and RNAS planes and Brandenburg directed his squadron to fly towards home.

"On the way, one of the Gothas was shot down and another crash-landed; nevertheless the attack was seen as a great success in Germany and raids by both aircraft and Zeppelins continued to the end of the war.

"The Folkestone raid left a total of 97 people dead and 195 injured, which was the highest figure for an enemy air raid up to that point. It was to be surpassed only twice in the remainder of the war, although the 63 killed in Tontine Street remained the highest fatality rate for civilians by a single bomb. A plaque was placed at the site to record this blackest of days for Folkestone. Fortunately, it was not targeted again during the war."

The memorial will take place at 5pm in The Methodist Church in Sandgate Road on May 25. The plaque will be at The Christchurch Memorial Garden.

CARNAGE: This image from 1917 shows some of the damage caused to Tontine Street after the bombing

ATTACK: One of the German Gotha aircraft which carried out the raid

BROTHERS: William, above, and Fred Stokes below. Both died.

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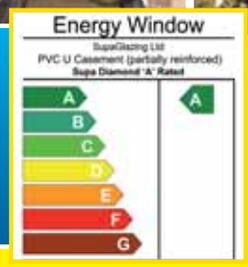

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How bricks and mortar is paving way for council's self-sufficiency

While authorities suffer the squeeze in reduced cash from central funds, we meet the leader of Sevenoaks council which has started acquiring a property portfolio to ensure it has a steady stream of revenue generators to plug the gap

By Tom Pyman
Tom.Pyman@archant.co.uk

INNOVATIVE commercial projects have helped a Kent authority become "the longest overnight success in history", its leader has claimed.

Last month, Sevenoaks District Council scooped a prestigious gong from the Local Government Chronicle Awards for its work in becoming totally self-sufficient in recent years, as it beat off competition from London boroughs and far larger county councils to be named council of the year.

Faced with ruthless cuts in funding from central government, the town hall decided it needed to make bold decisions in order to stand on its own two feet and took the risk of generating its own income through investing in a property portfolio.

The council has so far purchased a petrol station, office space, convenience store and a former Working Men's Club and car park, and is currently developing its own hotel.

With some local authorities fretting at the prospect of not a single penny being added to the coffers from Whitehall this coming year, Sevenoaks chiefs said they didn't need the £600,000 it received 12 months ago, and was instead able to plough the cash back into its portfolio, generating the kind of revenue that allows it to protect frontline services that are being slashed left, right and centre across the country.

"With any kind of success you have to have started a long time ago, and we probably laid the foundations in the early 2000s," Conservative leader Peter Fleming told KoS.

"I always say it's the longest overnight success in history.

"We made some fairly significant savings and took a lot of money out of our budget in 2010 and 2011.

"We have a rolling 10 year budget, we need an idea of what is going to happen – that's what any multi-million pound business would do.

"Our plan showed us government funding was going down rapidly – we've gone from £4m to £600,000 this year, to nothing at all next year.

"We saw the writing was on the wall so had to find a way of filling the gap left by government funding."

To do that, Cllr Fleming said the council needed to take into account "three planks".

Savings and efficiencies needed to be made, and the Conservative leader insists there are still targets to meet in that regard despite its success elsewhere.

It also recognises that council tax plays a big part, though efforts have been made to ensure the full burden doesn't fall on the taxpayer.

Finally, town halls need to find ways of generating their own income, which Cllr Fleming said was a key aspect of his long-term plan.

"We realised that because of banks' interest rates, our reserves – money held on trust - were not working hard enough for our residents, so we decided to use them to invest in property.

"We didn't need the £600,000 of funding last year as we became totally self-sufficient, so that money went straight into our investment pot.

"We always tried to get there a year early, if possible - it's good to set out a stall.

"And in terms of politics it's interesting because central government of all colours has seen local government as their 'agents'.

"As this spreads, it will change the relationship and allow local government to be more local about the choices it makes, which has to be a good thing.

"There is a mentality change coming saying 'is it better to be masters and mistresses of your own destiny?'.

"It's time for local government to break those ways of working that have been in place for a long time.

"If someone is not giving you money anymore, your relationship with them fundamentally changes – that's the nature of life, and it's no different for councils.

"Others will now be looking at their finances and looking at what solutions they can come up with."

However, Cllr Fleming is under no illusions that achieving that success is perhaps a little easier in that land values and income from investment property is far stronger in the leafy, affluent district than it is in some other areas of Kent and beyond.

Yet the process of generating the cash is so simple, it's difficult to see why other councils haven't followed suit sooner.

For the petrol station project in Swanley, it was simply a case of purchasing the land and leasing it to the operator who pays rent - an arrangement that is soon to be replicated with its planned hotel development.

FUTURE: Plans for a future Premier Inn which will open in a building owned and built by Sevenoaks District Council - leader Peter Fleming right - as part of its strategy of acquiring land and acting as a landlord in order to generate revenues to help swell public coffers. It could prove to be the way forward for local authorities facing enormous budget constraints

"The petrol station has a fairly sizeable level of return meaning we would get the entire purchase price back in 20 years and still own the asset at the end, so it was a no-brainer," he said.

"We have been risk-averse in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but then we got to that tipping point where the risk was actually greater to do nothing.

"The deal with Premier Inn for the hotel is about using a site we own and built with our money to their specifications, which they will then lease from us.

"You can buy 'off the shelf' or you can be more hands-on, like we have been with some of these projects."

Other authorities in Kent are slowly beginning to follow in their footsteps, however.

Ashford has been hailed for regenerating Park Mall shopping centre in the town centre after purchasing it in the summer of 2015 and is continuing to eye up other projects to keep council tax low.

Meanwhile, Canterbury City Council last year launched an online ideas lab, where residents could put forward their own suggestions for generating income, many of which, including setting up a construction company and developing an audio app for tourists, are still being considered and their viability investigated.

While Sevenoaks has kept its current opera-

Continued from page 16

Continued from page 15

tions within the district, Cllr Fleming says they are not afraid to look further afield in the future.

"We have looked at opportunities outside the district which we have not taken forward for whatever reason, but it's important to always go back to our members and have that conversation," he said.

"We've been doing this for a while now and need to make sure that members are comfortable – it would need to be the right investment and the right deal for us.

"Every investment comes with a risk, because if it didn't there would be no return and everyone would be doing it.

"It has to be a balanced risk against not doing anything.

"We try to diversify our portfolio so it's not all the same buildings in the same place.

"Whatever we do we try to keep residents informed so they know not just what we're doing, but why we're doing it as well.

"We have a highly-engaged population who are quick to tell us what we are doing wrong and that challenging is healthy because it highlights when we haven't got our message across clearly enough."

But while the council is open-minded about looking beyond its own boundaries, there are no plans to launch a merged council with its neighbours, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge and Malling, like the one which hit the buffers in east Kent last month.

The town halls of Canterbury, Dover, Shepway and Thanet were planning to join forces to create one large district council within the next two years, which chiefs said could provide savings of some £6.8m.

However, while the plan was given the green light in Dover and Thanet, Shepway councillors rejected the plans and council chiefs will now consider alternative proposals in the coming months.

"I'm a confirmed localist," Cllr Fleming said.

"If you go anywhere else in the world and look at local government, there are more powers and it's a system that really delivers locally.

"The east Kent districts have done a considerable amount of work together over the last few years and they're working out what's right for them.

"It's their solution to what is a big issue facing local government and it will be interesting to watch the debate.

"For me personally, I think it's quite a big area, and those four districts are very different and diverse, but they believe it will find savings and work for their communities, and it would be wrong for me to say whether that's right or wrong."

Cllr Fleming said such a move would be unlikely to work in the west of the county, with the district bordering the London boroughs of Bromley and Bexley, Wealden in East Sussex and Tandridge in Surrey, as well as areas in Kent.

"I always say we are like the Switzerland of local government because we have eight borders, but only four of those are against other Kent areas," he said.

"Therefore, half the way we're looking out is not towards Kent and that changes your outlook.

"We have residents who go to London every day so they're looking north, rather than east, which is why there aren't any plans for a west Kent council.

"However, we've approached Kent County Council and asked how we can work better within the current structure, and Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells are doing the same.

"We've spoken about KCC pressures and we think there's lots of things districts can do in terms of helping keep people out of hospital and getting them out of hospital and back home, for example."

SURROUNDINGS: Sevenoaks is one of the most affluent boroughs in the county, but the local authority has been proactive due to the budget cuts

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KOS/15

FUTURE: The Kent & Canterbury Hospital's long-term health remains unclear as East Kent Hospitals University NHS Trust ponders its options going forward

Campaigners demand answers - KoS gets them from health chiefs

Tom Pyman asks hospital trust to respond to list of questions posed by east Kent health campaigners

BOSSES at an under-fire health trust have responded to calls for transparency over the growing crisis at one of the county's major hospitals.

East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust (EKHUFT) announced last week more than half of the junior doctors at the Kent & Canterbury Hospital would have to move to other sites in Ashford and Margate, due to a lack of permanent consultant doctors who oversee and support their training.

Additionally, hundreds of patients attending the hospital's urgent care centre by ambulance would instead be taken to the emergency departments at William Harvey and the QEQM.

Campaigners at the Concern for Health in East Kent (CHEK) group told us last week they feared the Ashford hospital would 'collapse' under increased pressure and then issued an open letter and demanded further answers from the trust.

We, in turn, passed the questions to the trust who this week provided the following answers:

On accountability and why the trust finds itself in this situation...

"The trust board is responsible for monitoring the trust's risks, and the trust is responsible to its regulators NHS Improvement and the Care Quality Commission.

"The challenges of maintaining substantive consultant cover in some services at K&C was reported to the trust's board of directors in late 2015 and has been publicly documented since December 2015 on the trust's risk register, which is routinely published in the trust's public board papers on the trust's website.

"The trust has been working hard to mitigate this risk.

"We have done a lot of work to improve the recruitment of permanent consultants and in 2016 we made changes to the way we organise urgent care services at K&C to meet new junior doctor training requirements.

"This was approved by Health Education England (HEE) which has acknowledged the major efforts made by staff in the hospital to support training and understands the challenges of maintaining this support when many consultant posts are covered by locum doctors.

"HEE has been consistent with the CQC and NHS Improvement's assurances that the hospital is safe, but the proposed withdrawal of some medical trainees means we have to change how we provide some inpatient medical services to maintain that safety.

"We have advertised 88 times for consultant posts within our urgent care and long-term conditions division in the year to date and continue to actively do all we can to recruit, using jobs fairs, recruitment agencies, social media and head-hunters.

"In the year to date, 12 have been appointed and started, and one has since resigned.

"Six have been offered posts of which three are undergoing pre-employment checks, one has declined and two, who have been recently interviewed, are awaiting acceptance.

"We have been working very hard to recruit more doctors from the UK and overseas for some time now and will continue to do so, with regular national and international recruitment campaigns.

"This is a national picture and is made more difficult in east Kent because of our relatively isolated location and because our rotas are stretched across a small number of consultants."

On why there is a shortage of doctors...

"Today's NHS is still set up to work the way it did 30 years ago.

"There have been huge medical advances since then and we treat patients very differently now, with a real emphasis on specialist teams looking after people with specific conditions such as stroke – this has led to much more effective treatment and people are living longer, with better quality of life.

"This is fantastic for patients, but it also leads to situations where there simply aren't enough doctors to work in these specialist teams across each individual site within the NHS and that puts very real pressure on our ability to provide safe services for patients.

"Finding enough doctors to work at Kent & Canterbury Hospital has been difficult.

"There is a national shortage of these doctors, but the stretched consultant workload at Canterbury has made it difficult to both attract and retain new staff.

"The lengthy process of developing a long-term clinical strategy for hospital services in east Kent has added to the recruitment difficulties, due to a lack of clarity about the long-term for potential applicants.

"In recent months, there have been unexpected medical consultant vacancies and long-term unavoidable absences that have added to these issues."

On transferring consultants from other trust hospitals...

"We have looked at the option of transferring consultants to K&C from William Harvey Hospital and QEQM.

"But there have also been medical vacancies at Ashford and Margate, which has removed the option of re-locating staff from those two sites.

"There are two consultant vacancies at the QEQM and eight at the William Harvey hospital.

"Despite these pressures, the trust has maintained safe services, as demonstrated by mortality rates significantly better than the national average and we are, where possible, sharing our resources across the sites.

"However, this does not make for a sustainable model going forward.

"The trust's continued and significant improvements in patient care have been documented by the Care Quality Commission and resulted in the trust being lifted out of quality special measures in February."

On changes made to organising services to meet junior doctor training requirements...

"There has not been a full A&E at Kent & Canterbury Hospital since 2005 when services at the trust were reconfigured.

"The A&E then became an emergency care centre (ECC) which dealt with minor injuries and minor illnesses and also accepted some other emergency cases, but critically not general surgical emergencies.

"Since 2005, the ECC had been seeing more and more patients as original criteria for patients attending was slowly widened – such as those with acute abdominal pain – whose healthcare needs would be better met at another site where general surgery is available.

"In addition, the training of junior doctors has become increasingly specialised.

"In October 2015, Health Education Kent, Surrey, Sussex (HEKSS) advised the trust that it was no longer appropriate for medical trainees without A&E training to continue to be asked to manage the broader range of medical

■ **Continued on page 20**

■ Continued from page 19

and surgical emergencies presenting to the ECC.

"To keep the medical junior doctors at the hospital, the trust refocused on the original patient group for the ECC and implemented a new model of care supported by HEKSS and NHS England, namely a Primary Care-led Urgent Care Centre (for minor injuries and minor illnesses) and an Acute Medical Admissions Unit.

"The Emergency Care Centre became the Urgent Care Centre in July 2016.

"This meant that patients who attend the K&C site are now 'streamed', so they see a GP for minor illness, a nurse for minor injuries and the hospital team via an Acute Medical Unit if the patient's complaint is more serious.

"These changes resulted in improved provision for junior doctors and an improvement in quality.

"Despite all of this, the HEE and GMC have decided this is not enough to maintain junior doctor rotas on site."

MARGATE: The QEQM will continue to offer A&E services - other decisions on its future have yet to be made

On plans to improve consultant recruitment...

"We will continue to do everything we can to recruit permanent consultant doctors.

"Over recent years, we have struggled to attract and retain doctors at Kent & Canterbury Hospital due to a stretched consultant workload.

"By reorganising the way we staff our services, we can provide better care for patients and make consultant workloads across all three of our acute hospital sites much more attractive to applicants and in doing so regain the excellent reputation for teaching and training the trust previously enjoyed."

On consultant vacancies...

"Within internal medicine (acute and general medicine) there are 17.99 whole time equivalent vacancies across the trust out of 78.71.

"We have absolutely no plans to stop or pause consultant recruitment.

"The number of consultant posts available will not be reducing in light of the temporary service moves.

"Neither is it true that other applicants have been told K&C is no longer recruiting.

"We are reviewing the posts currently being recruited to at K&C and if any of these roles will be affected by the temporary changes, we will get in touch with any applicants to explain how the temporary changes may affect their future role and where they will be working."

On how many consultant posts have been withdrawn...

"On one occasion, one consultant position was advertised, but the post was re-designed, in accordance with patient need during the recruitment process.

"Applications were received, but the job roles were reviewed and re-advertised in late February and candidates contacted about the advert and invited to apply again.

"Those applications are being processed."

On the safety of patients travelling between hospitals...

"There has not been a full A&E at Kent and Canterbury Hospital since 2005 and the trust has safely run emergency services for many east Kent patients from its hospitals at Ashford and Margate since then.

"For example, complex trauma cases and many heart attack patients across Kent are already taken straight to the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford for specialist care.

"The trust has a strong safety record, as evidenced by mortality rates significantly better than the national average.

"The withdrawal of medical trainees from K&C means we have to change how we provide some inpatient medical services to maintain that safety.

"It would not be safe to keep services as they are now, because without these junior doctors there will not be enough doctors to treat patients and that would be unsafe.

"The trust has a duty to maintain patient safety, which is why it needs to make temporary changes to some services.

"The changes will be temporary and will not be immediate, to allow time for the trust to develop its plans and test them to make sure patients will be safe and well looked after.

"The trust is working with other health and social care organisations in east Kent, its staff, and patient and carer representatives, to ensure that any changes cause as little disruption as possible. It has commissioned an independent review of its plans to provide objective assurance that the proposed plans are robust and will address the implications for patient safety on all of the sites."

On future plans for the K&C...

"We are looking at a model of care which makes the best use of all of our hospitals.

"Our early thinking for our three main hospitals, Margate, Canterbury and Ashford, is to have two emergency hospital centres which include 24/7 A&E and planned care, with one of these providing specialist services.

"The third site would be a hospital dedicated to planned care, for example hip and knee replacements, and rehabilitation, alongside a GP-led urgent care centre.

"These will be supported by strong local care in community settings or at home.

"Providing services across our sites in different ways means we can provide better care and outcomes for patients

ASHFORD: The William Harvey could 'collapse' claim campaigners anxious about changes to our hospitals

because we can give them the specialist care they need from a single expert team, instead of stretching every specialist service across multiple sites.

"So, while you might not be treated at your closest hospital, you will get care at the east Kent hospital that can provide the best treatment for you.

"In this model, there will still be two accident and emergency departments and an urgent care centre, as well as our minor injury units.

"We need local people to help us to get this right which is why there will be a public consultation.

"We have not decided which hospital would have which services.

"These options will form part of the public consultation that will be led by the clinical commissioning groups."

On financial issues...

"The temporary changes that we need to make are to preserve patient safety and are not about saving money.

"Health Education England (HEE) requested that EKHUFT make the changes due to a shortage of permanent consultant doctors who oversee and support junior doctor training."

Further questions...

The trust declined to answer why "some services in the past have been moved from the Kent & Canterbury without any consultation" as it was "simply untrue".

It also said it would not be appropriate to answer another question on the role of clinical commissioning groups (CCG) in the crisis.

But a spokesperson for the four east Kent CCGs told us: "CCGs hold the budget for healthcare provision in east Kent and are responsible for commissioning safe and high quality services that meet the needs of the communities they serve.

"While we recognise the vital importance of training in ensuring we have a highly-skilled clinical workforce, CCGs do not have any direct involvement in healthcare education and training.

CHIEF: Matthew Kershaw is facing tough decisions at the trust

"CCGs accept that temporary changes are necessary to maintain patient safety while ensuring junior doctors receive the training they need.

"Less than five per cent of those attending Kent & Canterbury Hospital are likely to be affected and we are keen to ensure disruption to patients is being kept to an absolute minimum."

■ What do you think of the responses? Let us know by sharing your views and joining the debate. Email us at editorial@kosmedia.co.uk or write to: The Editor, KoS, Kent House, 81 Station Road, Ashford, TN23 1PP. We'll feature some of the best on our letters' page.

Golden girl Dame Kelly calls for more grassroots funding

We meet the double Olympic champion at her Hildenborough cafe as she gets all set to take part in the 200-mile long Great Kent Cycle Ride taking place this July

By Tom Pyman
Tom.Pyman@archant.co.uk

DAME Kelly Holmes insists there is still a lack of funding reaching grassroots sport in Kent as she gears up for a unique, cross-county cycle ride this summer.

The double Olympic champion will be taking part in the first ever Goatham's Great Kent Cycle Ride covering nearly 200 miles across the county in aid of Kent Sports Trust Foundation and Help for Heroes over the course of a three-day event in July.

Leaving the headquarters of fruit growers AC Goatham & Son at Flanders Farm, Hoo, on the morning of Friday, July 14, the cyclists will begin their journey, taking in some of the county's most famous scenery.

The aim is to get people of all ages and all abilities on their bikes to experience the county's landscape like never before, with key landmarks acting as finishing lines.

One of these will be Longfield track Brands Hatch, and bosses say the ride on that particular day will be dedicated to Formula One legend John Surtees, who died just weeks ago.

And as speculation grows over the futures of Olympic legends like Laura and Jason Kenny, with British Cycling losing some £4m of funding, Dame Kelly says events like these are even more important to put sport on the map and make it accessible for all across the county.

Sitting down at the upmarket Cafe 1809 in Hildenborough, near Tonbridge - her own business named after the number she wore when striking gold in Greece in 2004 - she told KoS why she was looking forward to such a unique event.

"Being from Kent all my life, it's nice to be involved in something that's local, and it's a great event because cycling is one of those sports that's exploded over the past five or six years," she said.

"This is hitting a lot of areas in Kent that I probably haven't seen myself, even though I've lived here all my life; we've got a great county.

"I'm sure lots of different people will enter, from beginners up to avid cyclists and it'll be nice to be part of that mix.

"[The funding] wasn't feeding down to the grassroots and there's still not enough money coming down in my eyes so it's important to have events like these.

"But London 2012 has definitely helped raise the profile of sport generally.

"We're very priviliged in Kent because we took on that spirit quite well and wanted to create a legacy.

"We've got more people who are enthusiastic about it, more schools taking part in events.

"But legacy is a long-term word, it's not about the here and now, the legacy is when someone stands on a podium in 2020 and says 'I started because of 2012'."

The Kent Sports Trust Foundation aims to increase participation across the county, and CEO Steve Wolfe, who will also be taking part in the ride, echoed Dame Kelly's thoughts that a lack of cash for developing sport meant local events were more important than ever before.

"The reason we put stuff like this on is because the funding is being taken away," he said.

"Government is changing its strategies, the national and local governing bodies don't have the funding available, so we're engineering a way to provide sport that is accesible to all.

"As a charity, we're fundraising and the money we raise we put back into local projects to encourage more people to be active in sport.

"Tracey Crouch [sports minister and MP for Chatham and Aylesford] has changed the sports strategy because there was too much waste and too much bureaucracy.

"Over the three days we'll inspire so many people to get on their bikes by showing cycling is fun and a great way to get people out in the fresh air and exercising."

Dame Kelly has recently been recovering from a shoulder injury suffered in training for the race, but insists she will be match fit come July 14.

"I've been getting on my bike over the last couple of years, it's become a new sport for me, it's different and exciting because you learn a lot every day," she said.

"This is my home village and I like inspiring people to keep active and I think it'll be great to see so many people coming through.

"My shoulder is getting better, I am one of those novice cyclists that made a big mistake going out on a day I shouldn't have and paying the price.

"Kent is quite a special county - this side we've got lovely countryside,

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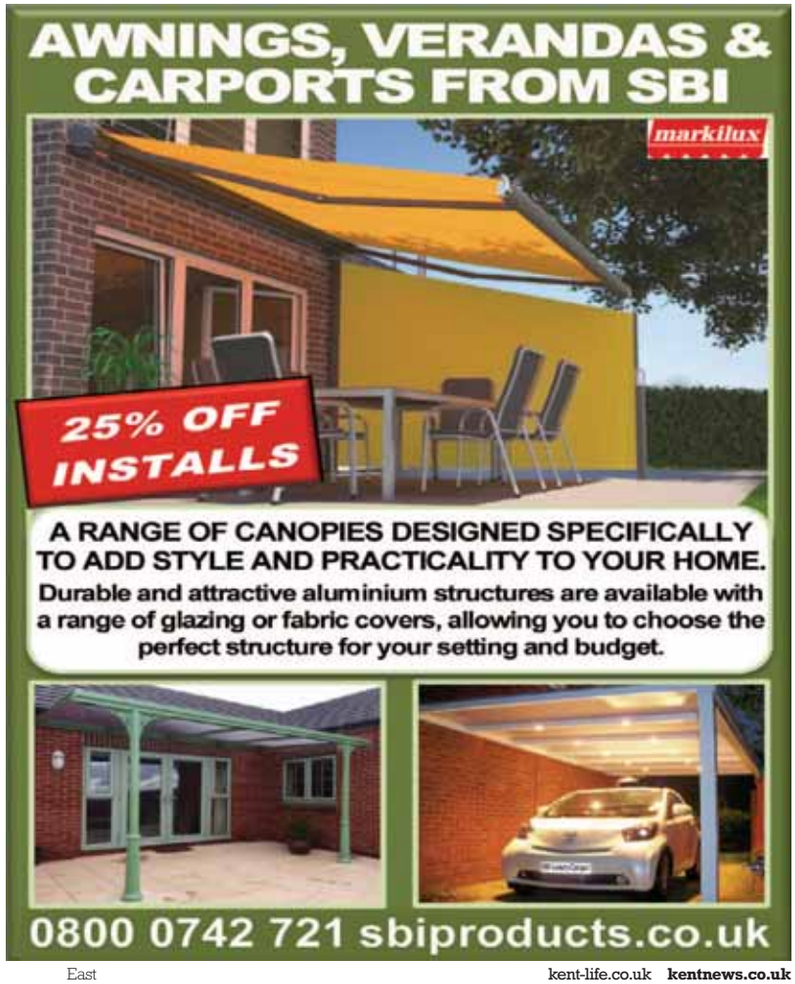

READY: Dame Kelly will be among those taking part in the charity race which covers the county this summer

SUCCESS: Open top bus tour through Tonbridge after glory in Athens 2004

we're very spoilt, and then you get down to the coastal areas, plus I haven't been to Canterbury in years and that's a lovely place.

"I'm not out there to kill myself, I just want to be among people and enjoy the experience if I can.

"There's so many clubs across Kent, I couldn't believe it.

"I try to create a message of this being more of a lifestyle cafe rather than just somewhere you can come and drink coffee, we have seen so many cyclists descend on us and that was the point to have a destination; bring people together in a community feel and promote a healthy lifestyle.

"If you're just getting into cycling I'd say go to one of these clubs because you can learn so much."

A driving force behind the event is Kent Sports Trust Foundation patron and Help for Heroes major fundraiser Steve Craddock, who said whole days have been spent touring the county making sure the route is as scenic and enjoyable as possible.

"It's designed to be a challenge and to push people and give them a real sense of achievement," he said.

"If we can inspire people who go away and talk to their friends and we get that knock-on effect, that'll be great, and to have people like Kelly getting involved is massive for us.

"What we want is someone who's 18 stone to get on a bike and do 5km, because if they do that every day for the next three months, they're looking after their body and ultimately getting more out of life."

■ **Those looking to secure a place on the ride can do so at http://bit.ly/2n9WkMF**

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CELEBRATION: Marti Pellow fronts the Scottish band who mark their 30th anniversary this year

Castle Concerts prepare to get Wet Wet Wet this year

Veteran pop group will make sure Love Is All Around when they play on July 12

THE Castle Concerts have announced the latest headliner to perform ahead of Craig David on stage at Rochester Castle.

Pop group Wet Wet Wet will entertain crowds at the event on July 12, and have promised to perform their back catalogue of songs including, Goodnight Girl and Love Is All Around.

The Glasgow group sold over 15 million singles and albums since forming in 1987, and have appeared in the singles and album charts for more than 500 weeks, altogether.

Love Is All Around, from the Four Weddings and a Funeral soundtrack topped the chart for a staggering 15 weeks in 1994 and is Britain's all-time top-selling love ballad.

This year will see them celebrate their 30th anniversary by releasing a five-disc special edition album.

They plan to get a little help from friends at the show via support act The South.

When The Beautiful South split in 2007, some band members decided to continue, thus creating The South.

Singers Dave Hemingway and Alison Wheeler, along with Damon Butcher, Gaz Birtkes, abd Tony Robinson came together to form the new nine-piece band.

The Magic of Motown will be bringing soul to the venue on the Friday night (July 14).

Crowds will be able to celebrate the sound of Marvin Gaye, Diana Ross, Stevie Wonder, The Temptations, The Supremes, The Four Tops, Martha Reeves, Jackson 5, Lionel Richie, and Smokey Robinson, when they're recreated with a live band.

The Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra will be returning to their annual slot at the Castle Concerts for the Proms finale on July 15. This year they'll be celebrating 70 years of playing.

Visitors will witness an evening of patriotism with all of the classical favourites including Sailor's Hornpipe, Rule Britannia, Jerusalem, and Land of Hope and Glory.

Previously announced for the line-up was Thursday night (July 13) headliner, Craig David.

The Brit Award nominee will be playing in Rochester as part of his long-awaited arena tour which kicked off on March 16.

Sixteen years after his debut album, Born To Do It, was released, he has been back at the top of the album charts with his latest album.

Fans can expect all the classics and hits from the latest album.

Medway council's portfolio holder for community services, Howard Doe, said: "We can't wait to once again welcome thousands of people to Medway for four nights of great music. The concerts are a key part of our large events calendar here in Medway and we hope that residents and those from further afield, will snap up tickets and enjoy the music in the wonderful setting that is Rochester Castle gardens."

All of the concerts will take place from July 12 to 15.

You can purchase tickets by visiting thecastleconcerts.co.uk, call 01634 338338, or by visiting Rochester Visitors' Centre in the High Street.

But be quick. Tickets for a number of the shows went on sale this week and demand for the big name shows is expected to out-strip supply sooner rather than later.

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ANITA widow, young at heart, seeks male 60 to 70 for fun. I love dancing and pub lunches. Genuine responses. **Text only. Mailbox: 5673022**

JANE, young 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. **Tel: No: 0906 515 3010 Box: 409715**

CARING, cuddly lady, 70, looks younger, seeks honest romantic gent to bring happiness to her life. TLC and maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426263**

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. **Tel: 0906 515 3018 Box: 413399**

WIDOW, 70s, loves dancing, wining and dining, pub lunches, theatre, cinema, walks on the beach, the sun, WLTM a soul mate who has plenty of TLC to give. Is anyone out there? **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426189**

ATTRACTIVE genuine lady, n/s, homely, GSOH, likes countryside walks, travelling, holidays, seaside, WLTM kind, easygoing man, n/s, 50-67, for friendship and possible relationship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426545**

KATIE 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent 40+ Must be discreet, married or single. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3002 Box 419673**

GENTS, please call me if you are looking to meet a kind sincere lady for nights at the theatre, socialising etc. You can call or text me. I promise to reply, I'm very genuine. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426345**

SAMANTHA, 35yrs, attractive brunette with own business, seeks adventurous gent for casual relationship. **Tel: 0906 515 3034 Box 425979**

JACKIE is 54yrs and an attractive easygoing brunette, she's hoping to meet a similar minded chap for some fun, dates, chats, text or call me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426343**

JASMINE, 34yrs, non smoking first time dater! Easy going, attractive and hard working. Due to work commitments I'm looking for a no strings companion any age. Looks unimportant must have GSOH. **Tel: 0906 515 3014 Box 426201**

EMILY, mature well educated lady, blonde and smart and broadminded seeks gent any age for no strings fun. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3022 Box 421375**

MATURE lady 70s, various interests but a bit lonely, hoping to meet a gent to cheer me up, come on, we can have some fun together. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426349**

TAMIKA, mature black beauty, hourglass figure and open minded. Pls call if you are discreet, broad minded and nice. I can travel and accommodate. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3006 Box 422365**

HARRIETT 42yrs, blue eyed brunette with long lets and decent curves! Looking for a cheeky adventurous man for fun only. I live alone so can accommodate and can travel. Discretion assured. ACA. Give me a try. **Tel: 0906 515 3030 Box 426205**

ATTRACTIVE blonde lady, 54yrs, loyal, romantic and solvent hoping to meet a gent with GSOH for romance, sensual times and more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426341**

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OCTAVIA, black seductress, 53yrs, waiting to meet you. Pls text me today, **Text Only. Mailbox: 4090520**

PETITE black female, 51, slim build, into music, meals out and in, pubs, travelling, looking for a fit, white male, maybe Irish or Italian, for relationship and shared interests. Looks unimportant but sense of humour a must. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425949**

SLIM, tall, elegant, feminine, n/s, solvent lady, late 50s, likes travel and red wine, WLTM a tall, sincere, professional or retired gentleman. Genuine replies only please. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425883**

ANETTA, black cuddly lady seeks man who knows what a woman needs. I'm very friendly and have time for you. Please call or text me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425933**

KAREN, 52yrs, attractive with GSOH, very active and outgoing. If you are 40+ give me a call, lets have a chat, maybe meet up. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426339**

CORRINE, genuine advertiser seeking adult fun, no time wasters pls. I will respond to all msgs. **Text Only. Mailbox: 4035196**

CAROLINE, attractive mature lady, various interests, hoping to meet a smart gent for socialising, perhaps leading to something more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426347**

PHILIPPA, feminine open minded lady seeking adult fun, genuine responses only pls, no time-wasters. **Text Only: Mailbox: 4030610**

I'M a widow in my 70s, WLTM a gent, 65-75, with a GSOH, I love dancing, the sun, eating out, keep fit. Must be someone in the Woking, Weybridge, Guildford area. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424851**

MERRY widow seeks lovely lonely gent for companionship. Please call, we can have a chat and see how we get on. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425927**

ZARA 45, teenage son, seeking genuine male, 28-50, N/S for friendship, maybe more. Single dad welcome. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 404885**

PEGGY, 65, short hair, medium build, GSOH, n/s, don't drink, likes music, animals and travelling, looking for long lasting friendship with a gentleman, 60-68. Please no timewasters. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425425**

JANE, attractive and young looking 60 something lady, active, outgoing with interesting personality, hoping to meet a kind gent for occasional meetings. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425931**

GILLY, slim petite lady, affectionate and loving, solvent with own home, hoping to meet gent, must be kind, looks unimportant. ACA/text answered. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425929**

WANTED gent 50-76 for cosy nights in, good times, call or text me, you won't be sorry. I'm attractive and have lots to offer. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425339**

LINDA, 48yrs attractive brunette seeks gent for laughter, wining dining. Age unimportant. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425337**

SUE, attractive genuine lady, own home, loves to spoil a man, give me a call or text. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424673**

LOUISE 46, busty, 5ft 3ins, long hair, fun, likes to chat, likes meals out, drinks, seeking N/S male, 28-49 for dating. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414131**

MATURE slim, feminine widow, loves concerts, art galleries, long walks, travelling. Seeks sincere gent for friendship/relationship. **Text only. Mailbox: 5702952**

EILEEN mid 60s seeks gent 50s-60s for friendship, possibly much more. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425341**

SOLVENT gentleman, young 70s, loves life seeking a lady of any age to spoil and pamper, take on holidays, wine and dine. Genuine advertiser. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425935**

SURREY man, 60, n/s, full working order, seeks daytime/evening fun and friendship with slim attractive lady, will travel, discretion assured **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423521**

SINGLE male, 60, n/s, fit, retiring soon, no ties, seeks attractive female for friendship, meetings and more hopefully. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425715**

JAMAICAN male, n/s, lives South East London, various interests seeks female for friendship, possible long-term relationship. **Text only. Mailbox: 4470583**

MALE, 22 years old, mixed race looking for experienced and mature, curvy woman any age up to 48 to have fun and be naughty with. **Text only. Mailbox: 5741065**

KEN, mature, 58, genuine, white, curious male, WLTM white single or widowed lady, 65-75, mature and genuine, for friendship and fun times in private. If you would like a toy boy who is genuine and down to earth, strange request but true, give me a call! **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425603**

JAMAICAN male, 68, n/s, likes walking, cinema, theatre, meals out, holidays, seeks slim to medium build West Indian lady for a relationship. Must be n/s, 60-65. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425623**

MALE, 50s, 6ft4, blonde. A 50s/60s circuit singer. Looking for lady of similar age and with good sense of humour. **Text only. Mailbox: 5691198**

MALE seeking friendly, discreet, professional lady, enjoy walks. Rural location preferred. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 418135**

MIDDLE aged man, Italian good looks, seeks attractive female. Get in touch I would be very pleased to meet you! **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425771**

DAVID 60s, slim, submissive, seeking plus size mature dominating lady to show me the error of my ways. Discretion assured. **Text only. Mailbox: 4370067**

SILVER fox, presentable, 5ft11, medium build, n/s, GSOH, seeks lady to share fun, TLC, mutual pleasures, for discreet no strings relationship. Daytime/evening, will travel or accommodate. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424203**

GENUINE, nice man, 60s, 5ft10, n/s, presentable, GSOH, romantic, sincere, many interests, OHAC, seeks attractive feminine soul mate to share TLC and more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425465**

JOHN, widower, 65, likes country walks, places of interest, museums, antique fairs, holidays, short breaks, WLTM a slim, n/s lady, 55+, for companionship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425555**

JOHN, easy going, home owner, n/s, WLTM a similar retired, genuine, attractive lady, for friendship, discretion assured and I will travel. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424091**

MICHAEL, widower, lives in Guildford area, I would love to meet that special lady for company and fun. I hope to be hearing from you soon. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424859**

YOUNG 70s guy, n/s, driver, many interests, friendly, social drinker, likes a laugh, seeks friendly lady. Hope you ring me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425533**

MICHAEL, blue eyes, brown hair, would like to meet a caring, loving lady, 45-48, for friendship and more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425511**

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CHRIS, 49yrs honest gent seeks lady 45-55 for socialising, friendship, maybe leading to romance. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425345**

PROFESSIONAL gent, 44yrs, tall, attractive and genuine. Seeks genuine feminine lady for genuine romance. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425333**

YOUNG 70s male, clean, n/s, kind, friendly, many interests, singing, karaoke, seeks a friend to chat with and go out with. Hope you ring me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425531**

SINGLE male, 43, 5ft10, stocky, seeking a larger, busty, sexy woman, size 16 up to size 20, aged 38-50, for no strings adult fun. Any status. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425365**

MALCOLM, 60 something gent, own hair and teeth, GSOH, genuine and Kind WLTM sincere lady to wine and dine. Please call. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425335**

Men Seeking

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

mydate24

WHITE male, 39, into music, movies and travel, seeking slim female, 25-45, for possible long-term relationship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426229**

ROMANTIC male, 54, caring, honest, likes dancing, cinema , walking, gardening, cooking, holidays and travel, seeks lady for fun and possible long-term relationship. Single mum welcome. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426187**

MALE, 57, good looking, toned, into all kinds of fun, seeks likeminded lady for mutual good times. I prefer younger women. **Text only. Mailbox: 5443614**

TERRY, 58, 5ft11, looking for a broad-minded lady for mutual fun. Call any time. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426013**

JOHN, very tactile and very loving, looking for some fun with a local lady, discreet and broadminded, 35-45, to wine and dine. I can meet anytime so leave me a message. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426407**

PROFESSIONAL gentleman, 60s, slim, discreet, WLTM easygoing lady in East Surrey for LTR. No timewasters please. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425439**

GENUINE retired mature single gent, own seaside home, wishes to meet female. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426239**

JOHN, 72, GSOH, own house, WLTM a nice lady with a GSOH, to have fun with and to be a friend and to see what may follow. Good things hopefully! **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426391**

CALLING all ladies 40+ who would like to be wined, dined and romanced by attractive gent, 54 years please call or text me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425943**

PROFESSIONAL gent, mid 60s loves holidays, wining dining, shows in London, seeking similar minded lady to romance. Own house car. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425941**

GENUINE single gent, 55yrs, seeks friendship hopefully leading to true love with lady 35-55, looks unimportant. Please call or text me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425937**

ANDY 6ft, athletic build, seeking sexy lady, voluptuous for fun times. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 415163**

MALE, 80s, seeking female company, any age, homely type, single. Will answer all texts. Give it a try. **Text only. Mailbox: 5775094**

BEN, 49, attractive, good physique, 5ft10, good hair, nice smile, seeks lady, younger or mature, who desires occasional, no strings, discreet, passionate times with a nice guy who is understanding, well groomed, intelligent and respectful. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425853**

GENUINE, nice man, 60s, 5ft10, n/s, presentable, GSOH, romantic, sincere, many interests, OHAC, seeks attractive feminine soul mate to share TLC and more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425465**

Gay Seeking

Join our Gay online service **FREE** visit: **localgaydate.co.uk**

GAY man 40, seeking gay man for friendship, later for relationship, long term, nice time. **Text only. Mailbox: 5793715**

BI male, seeking to meet pre op TS or TV, for no strings attached, local fun. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422647**

SUB bi guy, 65, well built, 18st, smooth, w/e, WLTM hygienic dom, girls/boys, for regular slave training, fetish fun. No idiots. East Sussex/travel. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426421**

SIMON, 29yrs, gay curious, seeking older gent for new experiences, must be discreet as I live at home. **Text Only: Mailbox: 4196422**

Friends

SLIM straight guy into CD and role-play, WLTM similar for friendship and fun. **Text only Mailbox: 5544057**

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Keston Cobblers release new album and get LeeFest ready

By Emily King
emily.king@archant.co.uk

BROMLEY'S Keston Cobblers Club ave come a long way since forming seven years ago. They've played Glastonbury, Bestival, toured the country and further afield. and last week released their second album.

The five-piece, made up of brother and sister, Matt and Julia Lowe, Tom Sweet, Bethan Ecclestone and Harry Stasinopoulos, still use Keston as their base - practicing and recording from the Lowe family home.

Mr Lowe says: "We do everything at my parents' house. We have a studio there, we practice there. Without it, we wouldn't be where we are today.

"That's why we've named this album, Almost Home, as it's very personal. Everyone can relate to a home, and everyone will have different interpretations of it - for some people home is sad, and for others it's the best place."

The band typically play big, brassy, orchestral sounds, but have stated that this time round they've simplified it.

HOMELY: The five-piece all practice and record in the family home of two band members

Explaining, Mr Sweet says: "There are moments of embellishment, but it's nice to go back to basics, and to have the album stripped down.

"We're really excited to get it out. It's been over a year in the making, and we just want our friends, family and fans to hear it now."

The Cobblers are all set to return to Tunbridge Wells' LeeFest this year, and it's something they're "really looking forward to".

Mr Lowe said: "They've massively upped it this year. LeeFest has been really good to us. they let us play when we were just starting out, when nobody else would take us - it was the first festival we ever played."

Though they know they're heading towards a summer of festivals again this year, the band were keeping tight lipped about which ones, stating they're not allowed to annouce anything before the festival organisers do.

They did mention that they try to make Glastonbury, which takes place at the end of June, a yearly occasion though.

As well as their album release, the Cobblers are also touring and visiting St Mary's Church in Ashford on April 22.

Visit kestoncobblersclub.com

Mayall blues fans get ready

BLUES legend, John Mayall, is making his way to Tunbridge Wells' Assembly Hall on October 22, with his tour celebrating six decades.

For tickets visit assemblyhall-theatre.co.uk

Mister's making shapes

JOIN CBeebies' Mister Maker in his hit live theatre show which is coming to Margate's Winter Gardens on October 14.

There's a 'big make' to take part in, lots of audience participation and help from The Shapes. The show is suitable for ages 2-8.

For tickets visit margatewintergardens.com

Ayesha lifts political lid

FORMER Labour special adviser turned stand-up comedian Ayesha Hazarika MBE has announced her tour is coming to Gravesend's Woodville Theatre on May 14.

Visit woodville.seatlive.com

Eggcellent beach events

THIS Easter, children are invited down to Thanet beaches to look for shark egg cases, and help to create a marine masterpiece.

The events aimed at the four - 11 year-old age group have been organised by the Thanet Coast Project.

For more information visit nekmpa.org.uk

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Put on Blue Suede Shoes

A MUSICAL gracing Gravesend's Woodville Theatre from August 28 to 29, will mark the 40th anniversary since the death of Elvis Presley.

For tickets visit woodville.seatlive.com

A Celebration of Youth

OVER 150 young musicians and performers will perform a programme of music entitled A Celebration of Youth at the Colyer-Fergusson Hall in Canterbury on April 8.

For tickets to the concert ,by the Kent Youth Wind Orchestra and Kent Youth Junior and Senior Choirs, visit kent-music.com

Musician's song portraits

PIANIST Rick Wakeman is playing at Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre on June 4.

He will be performing music from Piano Portraits, as well as previous albums.

Visit marlowetheatre.com.

Back to folk beginnings

THE original 1992 Tenterden Folk Festival line-up is returning to the town's stages for the 25th anniversary from October 5 to 8.

Folk star Tim Laycock will play alongside Kent's own Doug Hudson, and the Woodchurch Morris Men.

For tickets visit tenterdenfolkfestival.org.uk

Review: Friday night comedy club's laughs

ByEmily King

emily.king@archant.co.uk

ONE Friday every month hundreds of people flock to Ashford International Hotel for the Comedy Club.

The night has been going for 12 years now, and still seems to be at the height of popularity, last week.

The host comedian for the night was BBC Radio Kent presenter Steve N Allen. He graced the stage with confidence and enthusiasm.

There was a hen night, a 40th birthday party, and a 50th birthday party in attendence - queue jokes about ridiculous presents (one woman's husband bought her skydiving, he was asking for an accident...).

Steve's jokes had the audience laughing, and even shouting out, which in turn created more for him to pick up on and use during his performance.

My only issue with Steve's time on the stage was when the audience were asked to come up with two things for themselves to create a joke about. A colander was one, and Trump the other.

It just seemed too obvious, and therefore every joke was the same - what's the difference between- them? A colander lets things through.

The headline act, Junior Simpson, was an act I was really looking forward to, being a big Love Actually fan (he played the DJ).

He succeeded in interacting with the audience, changing his routine on the spot and encorporating the crowd into his jokes.

However, if you're one to squirm at crudeness, Junior's act probably isn't for you.

One part of his show referenced the 2002 song My Neck, My Back by Khia, which is probably the rudest song in the English language.

My problem wasn't the crudeness per se, but more that it was 15 years old. But with comedy being of personal preference, maybe it just wasn't for me.

All in all, it was a good friday night out, where you don't need to move venue for the food, comedy, or the disco afterwards.

POPULAR: Steve N Allen is also a BBC Radio Kent presenter

SUCCESS: Junior Simpson's observational humour was a win

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Wahaca founder's book oozes Mexican themes

Thomasina Miers' brings out her latest cookbook the same year the food chain celebrates 10 years...

YOU will find a brachiosaurus moseying through an asparagus forest, a tiger surveying a field of Szechuan peppers, and a duck bobbing about with a load of cherry tomatoes in Thomasina Miers' new recipe collection, Home Cook.

And they all look so happy.

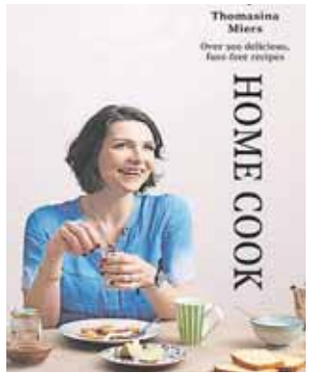
"You can tell I was pregnant when I was making it, can't you?!" the Cheltenham-born chef and restaurateur yelps with a laugh. "Oh my God, we had so much fun! The designer to begin with was like, 'What are you doing with all the toys? Get them out!'

Fortunately the designer caved in, and plastic toys dotting the pages included, Miers' fifth book is all clean lines and straightforward recipes. It pops with colour and is bolstered by Mexican influences - this is, after all, the woman who co-founded popular restaurant chain, Wahaca, which is now in its 10th year of taco slinging.

At its core though, Home Cook is a reflection of "how we eat at home", says Miers, 41, and how having three small children and a restaurant empire affects that.

"The food I cook now is very different to the food I cooked 20 years ago, when I had all the time in the world," she explains. "I'm a working mother, who comes home late sometimes and just has to get food out on the table, but equally, I want to feed my family good food."

The collection of 300-odd recipes,



HEALTHY: Thomasina Miers' recipes are vibrant but organic

she says, is also a "guilt-free joyous approach to food", in reaction to "all this neurosis about eating and what not to eat" that currently abounds.

"Healthy eating has become such a loaded, almost toxic subject," says Miers. "I grew up as a teenager full of hang-ups about food and always dieting, and it's such a bad way to live your life. Over the years, I've developed - I never say no to anything.

"The moment I say to myself, 'I won't do that', that's the first thing I want to do."

You have to work out what works for you, rather than letting trends and aspirational Instagram posts dictate your diet, she explains.

"Everybody's bodies are different; we all react to different ingredients in different ways, so it's nonsense to say one diet can be suitable for thousands of people, it doesn't work that way. It's about adapting your own likes and dislikes and eating the way that's right for you, and having fun with it.

"Basically, if you're cooking a bit from scratch at home, which you can do affordably and easily, then you're going to be eating healthily, and if you eat a few doughnuts along the way, it doesn't really matter."

Miers won MasterChef in 2005 and still appears on the series as a guest judge, which she says is "much more relaxing - although it brings all the memories back. It's amazing how food's moved on, so occasionally I just want to be doing it again, knowing what I know now."

Eclectic art exhibition

AN EXHIBITION of eclectic works by artists working in various mediums is now on show in the Control Tower at Kings Hill.

They include landscapes by photographer David Anthony Hall whose work has been exhibited at the Royal Academy of Art.

The exhibition is open to the public until the end of May.

For artists details visit kings-hill.com/live

FilmBox greets year 5

A COMMUNITY run pop-up cinema in Beckenham will celebrate its fifth year, this year, and is looking for local businesses to sponsor its celebratory film festival on September 30.

FilmBox is a not-for-profit self-funded venture, independently co-run by staff, parents and sixth form student volunteers from Langley Park School for Boys.

To sponsor visit langleyfilmbox.com

Free Tuesdays 'hop'

TENTERDEN'S resident singing group, The Tuesdays, are throwing an Easter 'hop' concert at the Zion Baptist Church on April 11.

Song sheets will be available, and the evening features favourites such as Islands In The Stream, Rhinestone Cowboy, You're Still The One, as well as current songs by Ed Sheeran, and One Republic.

Admission is free, and it begins at 7pm.

Crew lost shore sight

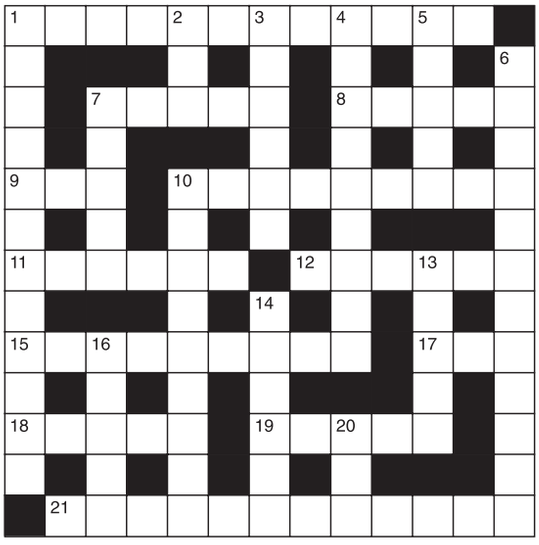
THE COXLESS CREW are releasing a documentary about their Pacific row at Broadstairs' The Palace Cinema on May 11.

Losing Sight of Shore follows the journey of the four women that set out to row the Pacific Ocean from America to Australia unsupported - going down in history as the first women to do this.

For tickets to the show call the box office on 01843 865726.

PUZZLES

DOUBLE CROSSWORD



Quick

Across
1. Dedication (12)
7. Defraud (5)
8. Consumed (5)
9. Mineral (3)
10. Persist (9)
11. Haphazard (6)
12. Sullen (6)
15. Swiftly (9)
17. Donkey (3)
18. Upright (5)
19. Unfasten (5)
21. Displeasing (12)

Down
1. Mapmaker (12)
2. Sheep (3)
3. Withdraw (6)
4. Ergo (9)
5. Bizarre (5)
6. Untenable (12)
7. Unsoiled (5)
10. Predictive (9)
13. Egg-shaped (5)
14. Shrewd (6)
16. Grim (5)
20. Child (3)

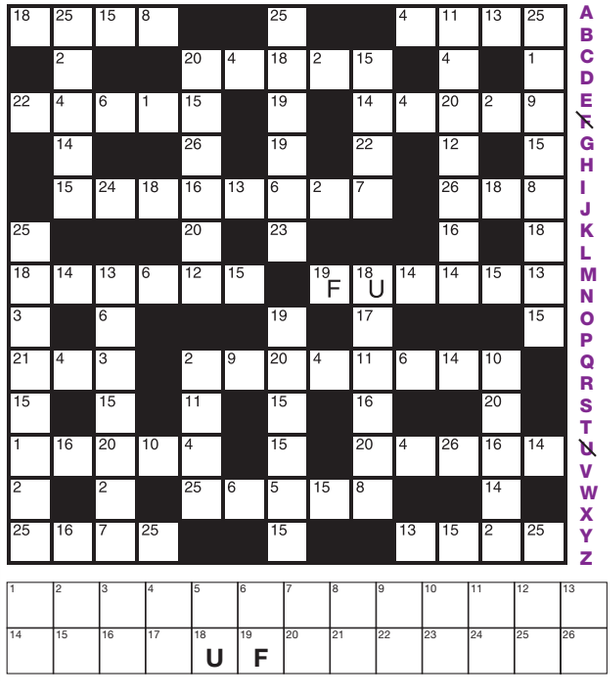
Cryptic

Across
1. It's useful for making a comeback (6,6)
7. One dividing my wealth (5)
8. Of one's birth in South Africa (5)
9. How one alters in time (3)
10. This association wants the nicest day for its formation (9)
11. Follows tracks (6)
12. Many admit to being inexperienced (6)
15. Sound quality is distorted on a screen (9)
17. Boring point of law (3)
18. Stay at sea (5)
19. It's the custom to give us time (5)
21. They profit from being in good company (12)

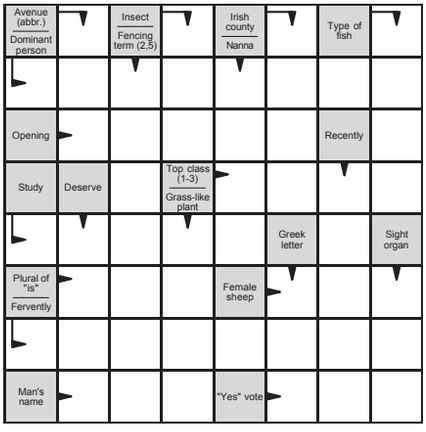
Down
1. Hardly descriptive of the time a final demand arrives (3,6,3)
2. Yet an actor may have it in a walk-on part (3)
3. Tiresome duty for a judge (6)
4. Frank had a meal, but hasn't yet had a seat (9)
5. Another bye perhaps (5)
6. Are they out on their feet? (12)
7. Heaven-sent sustenance for many a girl (5)
10. Peevish, through having a pathetic ending after a splendid start? (9)
13. Will or won't stay (5)
14. It's sufficient too upset one with an expression of disgust (6)
16. Begin to jump (5)
20. Suffer from partial failure (3)

CODEWORD

This puzzle has no clues. Instead, every number printed in the grid represents a letter, with the same number always representing the same letter.
For example, if 8 turns out to be a V, you can write in V wherever a square contains 8. Using your knowledge of words, complete the puzzle.



Arrowword

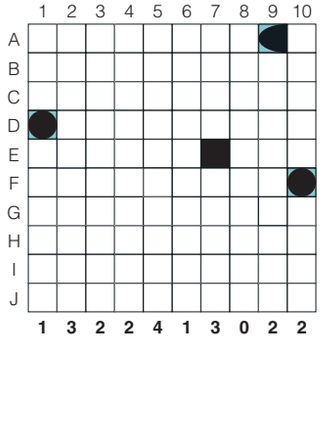


Enter your answers in the direction indicated by the arrows.

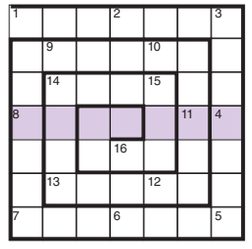
Battleships

Find where ships shown below are hidden in the grid. The numbers to the right of and below the grid indicate how many of the squares in that row are filled in with ships or parts of ships. The ships do not touch each other, even diagonally. Some of the squares have been filled to start you off.

THE FLEET
1 x Battleship
2 x Cruiser
3 x Destroyer
4 x Submarine



Word Spiral



Starting from 1, fill in the grid clockwise with four-letter words. The last letter of each word becomes the first letter of the next to reveal the key word in the shaded boxes.

1. Slimming plan
2. Sepulchre
3. Unruly child
4. Not that!
5. Hare's tail
6. Inform
7. Nobleman
8. Wharf
9. Slay
10. Girl
11. Plant ovule
12. Ruminant mammal
13. Ridge of coral
14. Ado
15. Long audible breath
16. Intimation

Keyword clue: An occupation

SUDOKU

Hard

	6			3			7	
5				4				6
		2				4		
		7	3		4	6		
	3						9	
		1	2		9	8		
		6				7		
7				9				8
	8			5			1	

Easy

2		5			9	6	1	
		7	4	6		2		
	6				1			3
6	2		3			4		9
	7			1			6	
		9		8	6		3	7
5								1
		6		5	7	8		
	1	4	8			3		6

Solutions

Arrowword

Battleships

Double Crossword
Cryptic
Across: 1 Return ticket; 7 Money; 8 Natal; 9 Eon; 10 Syndicate; 11 Trails; 12 Callow; 15 Resonance; 17 Awl; 18 Avast; 19 Usage; 21 Stockholders.
Down: 1 Red letter day; 2 Run; 3 Trying; 4 Candidate; 5 Extra; 6 Sleepwalkers; 7 Manna; 10 Splendid; 13 Leave; 14 Enough; 16 Start; 20 All.
Quick
Across: 1 Conseeration; 7 Cheat; 8 Eaten; 9 Ore; 10 Persevere; 11 Random; 12 Morose; 15 Posthaste; 17 Ass; 18 Erect; 19 Unfit; 21 Unacceptable. Down: 1 Cartographer; 2 Ewe; 3 Retire; 4 Therefore; 5 Outre; 6 Indefensible; 7 Clean; 10 Prophetic; 13 Ovate; 14 Astute; 16 Stern; 20 Tot.
Codeword
1=C, 2=T, 3=B, 4=O, 5=Z, 6=I, 7=Y, 8=D, 9=H, 10=G, 11=W, 12=K, 13=L, 14=N, 15=E, 16=A, 17=P, 18=U, 19=F, 20=R, 21=J, 22=V, 23=X, 24=Q, 25=S, 26=M
Word Spiral
1 Diet; 2 Tomb; 3 Brat; 4 This; 5 Scut; 6 Tell; 7 Lord; 8 Dock; 9 Kill; 10 Lass; 11 Seed; 12 Deer; 13 Reef; 14 Fuss; 15 Sigh; 16 Hint.
Keyword: Dentist

Sudoku - Easy

2	4	5	7	3	9	6	1	8
1	3	7	4	6	8	2	9	5
9	6	8	5	2	1	7	4	3
6	2	1	3	7	5	4	8	9
8	7	3	9	1	4	5	6	2
4	5	9	2	8	6	1	3	7
5	8	2	6	4	3	9	7	1
3	9	6	1	5	7	8	2	4
7	1	4	8	9	2	3	5	6

Sudoku - Hard

4	6	9	1	3	8	5	7	2
5	1	8	7	4	2	9	3	6
3	7	2	9	6	5	4	8	1
8	9	7	3	1	4	6	2	5
2	3	4	5	8	6	1	9	7
6	5	1	2	7	9	8	4	3
1	4	6	8	2	3	7	5	9
7	2	5	4	9	1	3	6	8
9	8	3	6	5	7	2	1	4

5 trips to teach you something new

All most of us bring back from our holiday is a camera full of pictures and some errant grains of sand in the suitcase. So, how about bringing back a new skill instead? **Mike Pickup** finds out more.

LEARN TO SAIL BY ISLAND HOPPING IN THE GREEK ISLANDS.

Holidays spent learning a new skill will give you a lifetime of memories and the chance to meet like-minded people.

1. Learn how to sail

LEARN to sail a yacht whilst island hopping in Greece. Flotilla sailing is fun as you sail your own yacht while enjoying the company of fellow holidaymakers each evening on the 10-12 other yachts in the flotilla. For beginners, the lead crews provide a comprehensive briefing on the boat and its operation on arrival. On your first morning you will be taken out and shown how to leave a harbour, work the anchor and pull the sails in and out, as well as how to turn on the engine. The lead crew will see you out of harbour each day, and will be there to take your lines when you arrive at the next destination. Should you still feel a little unsure, an extra pair of hands is on offer until you feel confident. However, sailing in calm non-tidal waters is easy and you can keep in touch with the other boats on the radio. Prices from £495 per person include flights, transfers, diesel, mooring fees, linen and towels and the guidance of the friendly flotilla lead crew. This is based on 4 sharing travelling on 16th October 2016 for a week. Two week options start at £595 per person. www.sailingholidays.com / 020 8459 8787

2. Learn how to dance

IT takes two to tango. Argentina may be the home of the Tango but it's a long way to go, so how about Umbria instead. Pop over to La Rogaia and learn how to dance under the stars on terraces overlooking the rolling hills off Tuscany. Classes are ideal for beginners - no stress and lots of fun. Instruction is in small intimate groups, a maximum of nine couples, allowing for individual attention. Each evening after dinner, put what you have learned into practice dancing the night away. Prices from £572 per person based on two sharing, include breakfast and dinner. www.vidados.com / 0203 750 2455

3. Learn yoga in Thailand

RECONNECT with nature and yourself on a luxury yoga holiday at Kamalaya on the southern coast of Thailand's Koh Samui island. A personalised programme for experienced yogis as well as beginners is on offer. Improve your well-being and yoga practice with instruction in asana (physical posture), pranayama (breathing) and meditation. Reach your personal goals with daily one-on-one private yoga sessions and the guidance of wellness experts during private consultations. Continue to heal your mind, body and soul with a choice of holistic Ayurveda spa treatments and therapies. Prices from £2,660pp for 7 nights include return flights, transfers, full board and a yoga programme. www.healthandfitnesstravel.com / 020 3397 8891

4. Become a photography expert

GET more from your camera and learn how to snap like a pro. The emphasis is on creativity, personal tuition and fun in some of the world's most photogenic destinations, including Australia, Burma, Croatia, Cuba, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Spain, Turkey, UK, USA and Vietnam. With group sizes ranging from six to twelve, you'll benefit from lots of personal tuition. Every outing is led by an experienced and passionate tutor; holidays and courses are as much social occasions as they are photography workshops. 2 – 13 night holidays range in price from £699 - £2699 (excluding flights).

A single supplement applies to some destinations but not all. Nonparticipating partners are welcome to attend for a reduced rate depending on the destination.

FOR more info visit www.frui.co.uk / 020 8123 4559

5. Learn to paint in Italy

MICHELANGELO, Raphael, Titian, Canaletto, Botticelli - Italy has produced more famous painters than you can shake a stick at.

SO, where better to learn the basics, or 'brush up' on your existing skills than in beautiful Italy?

YOU will spend your week staying in a quality hotel and enjoy the great food and wine for which Italy is famous, as well as stunning and inspiring landscapes.

IN addition to expert tuition you will have the opportunity to visit local places of interest.

THERE are no single supplements so the holidays are ideal for singles, or friends not wanting to share a room. A number of painting holidays also offer cookery lessons for non-painting partners. Prices from £1599 including airport transfers but not flights. www.paintinginitaly.com Call 0808 118 5729.

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Please include your name and address, although these will be withheld in exceptional circumstances, and a daytime phone number for verification (this will not be published). We reserve the right to edit all letters.

What about small scale unitary?

READING Tom Pyman's article it seemed inevitable that the merger of four so widely spread councils would not be practical.

A more sensible way forward would be to approach the matter on a more manageable scale by making two councils eg. Shepway and Dover into a unitary authority which would control all income from taxes.

This could free us of the financial burden of Kent County Council as the new authority would take over all responsibility for highways and so on.

Judy Trow,
by email

Duff 'deluded' reply shocker

DEAR old Ray Duff continues to wriggle like a fish on a hook, trying to find any argument he can to support his global warming obsession [KoS, last week].

There are many reasons the world could be warming up, other than mankind's activity, which he actually appears to be agreeing to, then trying to deny.

He's deluded if he imagines the Gadarene rush to self destruction is going to slow down, or the leaders of the world are going to have a Damascene conversion.

The present attempts at 'going green' are quite frankly laughable and only being pursued by a small percentage of people. His idea that all the 'goodies' that people have come to expect can be supplied by a few solar panels and windmills, is pie in the sky. The only way his world order could be carried through, would need major unaceptable changes that would lead to food shortages, lack of potable water and major unrest.

When, oh when, will he wake up to there being too many people, too much consumption of infinite resources and pollution killing us off before his beloved global warming obsession comes anywhere near?

Phil Granger,
West Malling

Keep cool, Ray, its getting chillier

MR Duff is well read but too selective and so fails to keep an open mind on matters.

So, let's have some facts: Earth's orbit goes from being near circular, to elliptical; this has a 100,000 year cycle. Currently, it's near circular.

The planet's axial tilt also shifts and this has a 22,000 year rhythm.

It also wobbles on its axis and this is on a 41,000 year cycle.

All this was carefully and neatly worked out by the Serbian mathematician Milankovich during his internment in the First World War.

This is further complicated by continental drift where the planet's land mass has moved mainly to north of the equator; there has been a reduction in volcanic activity too. Currently, there is less carbon dioxide in the atmosphere than there was 50 million years ago - not a huge time given the age of the Earth - this puts us back into the age of the dinosaurs.

Carbon dioxide was a prime facilitator in the evolution and diversity of life. Since 50 million years ago the planet has, albeit slowly, cooled.

The northern polar ice cap has always been prone to coming and going - it has no land mass sitting under it and is susceptible to the warmed ocean currents which soak up solar heat. Up until 2.75 million years ago it regularly melted away. Since 2.75 million years ago, the planet has cooled and the ice cap now persists year-round, but grows and melts.

The southern polar ice cap covers a huge land mass which acts as a cold sink, but the ocean ice surrounding it is prone to the warmed ocean currents like its northern cousin so grows and shrinks.

The danger is that many informed people take these events as though looking at a small portion of skin under a microscope and infer, wrongly, the nature and condition of the entire body. We should step back and view the whole in its entire context. The planet continues to cool.

Edward Baker,
Tunbridge Wells

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Kent deserves better than merger shambles

IT was a bad week for democracy - not only does a madman kill innocent people in London, but hours later, when asked whether to consult the public on the proposed merger of east Kent councils, Shepway councillors flunk it and torpedo the whole super council process.

When stability and leadership was sorely needed at national and district level, the assembly at Folkestone failed that test.

The losers in this debacle are the districts who have signed their own death warrants by admitting both to their own frailty and to being an artificial construct. Did not a leading councillor state 'after all, who identifies with Shepway?'. The answer to that is even fewer people now.

The winner is Kent County Council who can point to the utter failure of this proposal and offer their own unitary solution, which is no doubt waiting in the wings. In the meantime I suspect the status quo at district level will stagger on cutting away services as they go and selling the family silver in order to right the ship.

Shepway has done itself no favours by voting down the public engagement and may well have sealed its fate long term. It is amalgamation postponed not averted.

A dysfunctional system of three tier/unitary/clustering and god knows what else in Kent is hardly rational, sensible or remotely understandable to the public; we can surely do better than this.

What about the public? Where do they fit in all this? Nowhere is the probable reply.

We are in serious danger of becoming a laughing stock. The North has a powerhouse, London has its government, even Wiltshire, mentioned in the merger business case, has a functional rational local government.

In Kent we have self interest and muddle, this is not the way a great county should be going.

George Nokes
Dover

Duff fan club is 'silent majority'

THE silent majority know that those who refuse to entertain the idea global warming has nothing to do with man's relentless burning of fuels and rape of the land, are deluding only themselves.

Certainly, over population is a factor, but to dismiss moves towards renewable energies is just ludicrous. You're not alone, Ray Duff.

T Baker,
Ashford

Let's party like it's March 29, 2019

NOW that we have finally notified Brussels of our resignation from the EU I suggest that arrangements be made to designate March 29 as Freedom Day, a public holiday.

I also suggest that a string of beacons be set up throughout England and Wales, to be lit on the evening of March 29, 2019, to celebrate that, once again, Britain has repelled the efforts of a European empire to reduce us to no more than one of its provinces.

Colin Bullen,
Tonbridge

We have the staff to cure the NHS

THANK you Phil Granger for echoing my thoughts last week.

It is indeed an insult to the 1.6 million unemployed British people for them to be repeatedly told that the NHS wouldn't be able to function if we didn't employ thousands of "more willing" foreign workers.

Why do so many of our ruling political elite continually portray our own indigenous inhabitants as being incable to work in UK hospitals/ health departments?

If people are lied to often enough that they can't do something then they will end up convincing themselves it's true.

Of course, it is cheaper for the government to import skilled workers from overseas, but it is also unfair and morally wrong to treat a large section of our own people like second-class citizens.

Clive Wilkins-Oppler,
Petham

KOS 10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AS part of our commitment to providing the best service to you, we have produced our 10 guiding principles

Kent on Sunday will:

1) Be available in every postcode in Kent.
2) Be fair, accurate and balanced.
3) Be written in clear, concise English.
4) Not be overly sensational.
5) Have a sense of humour.
6) Have an easily understood division between news, comment and advertising.
7) Seek to celebrate as well as constructively criticise.
8) Highlight topical issues of concern to people living in the county.
9) Spotlight individual cases which raise broader concerns.
10) Champion causes that it feels are important to the well-being of the county and its people.

We hope you enjoy Kent on Sunday.

images of kent

Great Stour in Canterbury

by **Ernie Jordan from Margate**

To see your photograph printed, email **editorial@kosmedia.co.uk**,. Be sure to include your name, address and a contact telephone number. Unfortunately we cannot return any prints, and please do not send negatives.

holidays

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60s & 70s Sounds in Surrey

Thatcher's Hotel, Guildford

14 Apr, 24 Jun & 22 Sept, 2017 - Quote: TG-KOS

2 nights half board from £149pp

ENJOY a fun-packed party break at this charming Tudor-style hotel near Guildford, close to The Hogs Back Brewery, and Polesden Lacey, an Edwardian country house and estate. Entertainment on 14 Apr (Easter) with the Frankie Valli Story & The Cufflinks – £159pp; 24 June - Motown & Soul with Gee Bello & Roy Carter (ex-Drifters & Foundations) - £149pp; 22 Sept with The New Honeycombs and a tribute to Dusty Springfield - £149pp.

Over 40s only
£10pp deposit

INCLUDED: Entertainment both nights • 2 dinners and 2 breakfasts • 2 nights sharing an en-suite bedroom with TV, tea/coffee tray and free wifi • Free parking

Somerset Seaside 60s Party

Pontins Sand Bay Somerset Coast

Self-Drive • Friday, 16 June, 2017 - Quote: SA6-KOS

3 nights half board PLUS £159pp

Join us at Pontins Sand Bay resort, near Weston Super Mare in Somerset, for a Super Summer Party - for over 40s only - packed with entertainment. We've lined up a brilliant showbill with Union Gap, The Pacemakers, The Swinging Blue Jeans, Roy Carter (ex-Drifters & Foundations) PLUS The New All Stars. With non-stop entertainment from Friday evening to late Sunday and free drinks every night, this is going to be a party weekend to remember.

Free Drinks
Over 40s only
£10pp deposit

INCLUDED: 3 Free drinks per person per night - house beers & spirits, wine by the glass, pumped soft drinks & pumped mixers • Full entertainment programme • 3 nights en-suite chalet - club upgrade available • 3 breakfasts & 3 dinners • Free parking

Sounds of the 60s Summer Seaside Party

Pontins Pakefield, Suffolk Coast

Self-Drive • Friday, 7 July, 2017 - Quote: PA7-KOS

3 nights half board PLUS £149pp

Join us at Pontins Pakefield, on the Suffolk coast, for our exclusive, private summer 60s Party Weekend - for over 40s only. We've lined up a brilliant entertainment showbill featuring The Ivy League, Hermans Hermits, Vanity Fare, Steve Ellis's Love Affair, plus The Beached Boys. With non-stop fun from Friday evening to late on Sunday and HALF PRICE DRINKS, this is one party weekend you're sure to love.

Half Price Drinks
Over 40s only
£10pp deposit

INCLUDED: Half Price bar drinks - house beers & spirits, wine by the glass, pumped soft drinks & pumped mixers - lunch times and evenings from Friday night to Sunday night • Entertainment • 3 nights en-suite chalet - club upgrade available • 3 dinners & 3 breakfasts • Free parking

Top 60s Bands in Leicestershire

4* Hinckley Island Hotel

12 May & 7 July, 2017 - Quote HK-KOS

2 nights half board £159pp

Come with us on a trip down memory lane for some super 60s music hits and a friendly party atmosphere at this 4-star hotel in the heart of the Leicestershire countryside, near Nuneaton and Market Bosworth. Enjoy music from 60s bands The Ivy League and The Swinging Blue Jeans; and on 7 July The Fortunes and The Cufflinks. These party breaks are for over-40s only.

Over 40s only
£10pp deposit

INCLUDED: 2 nights sharing an en-suite bedroom with TV, tea/coffee tray and free wifi • 2 breakfasts & 2 dinners • Live entertainment both nights • Free parking

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driving

By Steve Loader
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

RANGE: Skyactive Pioneer MK2, second generation Mazda CX-5, left, the sporty Mazda MX-5, bottom, the Mazda CX-3, above, and the brand best-seller Mazda 3, below.

Mazda's evolution goes on with fresh look CX-5

JUST five years ago Mazda put down a marker with the CX-5.

It wasn't simply an all-new SUV (sports utility vehicle) but a flag waver for a technology suite that has revitalised the Japanese sporting marque.

Under the umbrella name of Skyactiv these new developments boosted driving pleasure, refinement and quality, power and performance, while cutting weight, fuel consumption and emissions.

The new approach was then extended to all other Mazda models and epitomised by the fourth-generation MX-5 roadster – the brand icon – which enabled a return to the light nimble roots of the original.

And now that pioneering CX-5 – still Mazda UK's second best seller after the slinky Mazda3 hatchback – is replaced by a new CX-5 expected to take both brand and model even higher when it goes on sale in June.

Wisely, Mazda has opted for evolution rather than revolution with the new car so, while it wears a sleeker and more cohesive body, it is roughly the same size outside and roomier inside with a slightly larger boot.

Other news is that Mazda will soon refresh its stylish Mazda2 supermini and excellent 'point and shoot' CX-3 junior SUV later this year, while also working with Toyota to produce a hybrid model; maybe Mazda will crack the code that allows a good looking sporty car running on a mix of petrol and electric power – few have got close so far.

The remaining car in the line-up is the family class Mazda6 saloon and estate, the latter being a particularly elegant and capacious load-lugger.

Mazda UK also signalled confidence in the future by recently moving its Dartford HQ from a shared site close to the Dartford Crossing to a standalone facility just down the road, which includes a showroom for the revitalised range and a new heritage collection.

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£13,500 **£249.88** PER MONTH*

15-64 VOLKSWAGEN TOURAN 1.6 TDI SE BLUEMOTION AUTO
- 1 OWNER • 7 SEATS
- HISTORY • 56,000 MILES
- £1,000 DEPOSIT • 3.5% INTEREST

£13,000 **£239.98** PER MONTH*

14-14 TOYOTA VERSO 1.8 VALVEMATIC ICON AUTO
- 1 OWNER • ALLOYS
- HISTORY • 29,000 MILES
- £1,000 DEPOSIT • 3.5% INTEREST

£12,500 **£220.19** PER MONTH*

14-14 PEUGEOT 5008 1.6 E-HDI ALLURE AUTO
- GLASS ROOF • 7 SEATS • ALLOYS
- HISTORY • 39,000 MILES
- £1,000 DEPOSIT • 3.5% INTEREST

£12,000 **£220.19** PER MONTH*

12-12 VOLKSWAGEN CADDY MAXI C20 1.6 TDI BLUEMOTION
- 1 OWNER • 7 SEATS • ALLOYS
- HISTORY • 56,000 MILES
- £1,000 DEPOSIT • 3.5% INTEREST

£12,000 **£220.19** PER MONTH*

12-62 SEAT ALHAMBRA 2.0 CR TDI ECOMOTIVE
- 1 OWNER • ALLOYS • AIR CON
- SEAT HISTORY • 64,000 MILES
- £1,000 DEPOSIT • 3.5% INTEREST

£12,000 **£220.19** PER MONTH*

13-13 FIAT SCUDO PANORAMA FAMILY MULTIJET
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11-11	**Renault Master 2.3 DCi Sl28 Panel Van,** ply-lined, bulkhead recent MOT, history, 77,000 miles	£6500+VAT
08-08	**Volkswagen Caddy C20 1.9 TDI,** 1 owner, SLD, ply-lined, buklhead, e/windows, 140,000 miles	£4300 NO VAT

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Peugeot 2008 shows it's all about face

French model's facelift has transformed what was already one of the best and ablest small SUVs/crossovers on the UK market and could now trump its rivals

Peugeot 2008 GT Line PureTech 130

Price:	from £20,015
Driving appeal:	★★★★
Image:	★★★★
Space:	★★★★★
Value:	★★★★★
Running costs:	★★★★
How green?:	★★★★
Best rival:	Renault Captur

THAT old expression 'putting on a brave face' could certainly be applied to the Peugeot 2008.

The compact crossover cum SUV (sports utility vehicle) was always endearing and practical but had a tentative front end expression at odds with the rufty-tufty image it aimed to present.

But a facelift last year, has given it a tougher look to complement versions fitted with Peugeot's excellent GripControl system, delivering an economical front-driven crossover/SUV with much of the grip expected of a 4x4.

GripControl is a beefed-up traction control system that kicks in if the car needs help on tricky surfaces and terrain, and is partnered with winter or higher grip tyres.

It works: I've seen the system used on a bigger 3008 to launch a glider from a grass airfield, and driven the smaller 2008 up and down the snowy face of an indoor ski slope without slipping and sliding – an experience guaranteed to endear the car to anyone.

Along with the new and more assertive front end, mid to high spec models also acquire chunky wheel arch extensions and scuff plates, to match existing pseudo off-roader styling.

Apart from the smart new grille, Peugeot has also added chic and shaped black and chrome headlamps and 3D LED rear lights, with the marque's distinctive lion's three-claw motif.

The whole package makes it a stronger proposition now against its toughest rival, the admittedly stylish Renault Captur, and will polarise opinion even more against that notorious 'Marmite motor' the Nissan Juke.

There wasn't much wrong with the 2008 cabin; fitted out with high quality materials and generous stowage, it is airy and roomy for its size - with or without a Peugeot signature Cielo panoramic roof.

The versatile rear cabin allows a 410-litre boot to transform swiftly to 1,400-litre load space, accessed across a low load sill of just 60cm.

And while many buyers will still shop diesel, I've been impressed by the clean and economical three-cylinder 109bhp 1.2-litre turbocharged petrol unit, which is lively enough yet has an official combined consumption of 64.2mpg.

Mated with a five-speed manual gearbox, it enables the high-riding 2008's excellent cornering composure and grip to be exploited, yet ride comfort is not compromised by this relatively taut chassis.

I've also now had an extended loan of the even nicer 130PS (129bhp) 1.2 PureTech in sporty GT Line trim. This is livelier (0-62mph in 9.3 seconds) with official economy still respectable at 58.9mpg (combined).

It is refined on the motorway and relaxed on a winding rural road.

*Verso Active 1.6 V-matic Manual at NIL Advance Payment. Model shown is a Verso Icon 7-Seat 1.6 V-matic Manual at £95 Advance Payment. AYGO x-press 5 door 1.0 VVT-i at NIL Advance Payment, Yaris Icon 5 door 1.4 D-4D Manual at NIL Advance Payment, Yaris Hybrid Icon 5 door 1.5 VVT-i Auto at NIL Advance Payment, and Auris Hybrid Icon 5 door 1.8 VVT-i Auto at £495 Advance Payment. Subject to availability. Please note that a total of 60,000 miles over three years are allowed on the Motability Contract Hire Scheme. Offer valid between 1st January and 31st March 2017. Available as part of the Motability Contract Hire Scheme.

Verso Icon 7-Seat 1.6 V-matic Manual. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 32.8 (8.6), Extra Urban 49.6 (5.7), Combined 41.5 (6.8). CO_2 Emissions 157g/km. AYGO x-press 5 door 1.0 VVT-i x-shift. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 56.5 (5.0), Extra Urban 78.5 (3.6), Combined 68.9 (4.1). CO_2 Emissions 95g/km. Yaris Icon 5 door 1.4 D-4D Manual. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 67.3 (4.2), Extra Urban 91.1 (3.1), Combined 80.7 (3.5). CO_2 Emissions 91/km. Yaris Hybrid Icon 5 door 1.5 VVT-i Auto. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 91.1 (3.1), Extra Urban 85.6 (3.3), Combined 85.6 (3.3). CO_2 Emissions 75g/km. Auris Hybrid Icon 5 door 1.8 VVT-i Auto. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 80.7 (3.5) Extra Urban 80.7 (3.5) Combined 78.5 (3.6). CO_2 Emissions 82g/km. All mpg and CO_2 figures quoted are sourced from official EU regulated laboratory test results. These are provided to allow comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect your actual driving experience.

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AGY

PLANNING

Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
NOTICE UNDER ARTICLE 13 OF APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

Proposed development at: Land Adj 305 Lordswood Lane, Chatham, Kent ME5 8JT

Take notice that an application is being made by: Lambert and Foster, Mr. M. Trice

For planning permission to: A proposed two storey single dwelling with garage, associated parking and access.

Local Planning Authority to whom the application is being submitted: Medway Council, Development Control, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR

Any owner of the land or tenant who wishes to make representations about this application, should write to the council within 21 days of the date of this notice.

Signatory: MR. NICK BRANDRETH

Date: 1st April 2017

Statement of owners' rights: The grant of planning permission does not affect owners' rights to retain or dispose of their property, unless there is some provision to the contrary in an agreement or lease.

Statement of agricultural tenants' rights: The grant of planning permission for non-agricultural development may affect agricultural tenants' security of tenure.

'Owner' means a person having a freehold interest or a leasehold interest the unexpired term of which is not less than seven years. 'Tenant' means a tenant of an agricultural holding any part of which is comprised in the land.

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

Blicker Recycling Ltd of Barracks Road, Sandy Lane Industrial Estate, Stourport DY13 9RW is applying for a licence to use Husk Commercial Vehicle services, The Freight Terminal, Lyden Hill, Dover CT15 7JN as an operating centre for 1 goods vehicle and 0 trailers.

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 6NF, stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's office.

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LEGAL AND PUBLIC NOTICES

HIGHWAYS ACT 1980 – SECTION 116
STOPPING UP OF LAND ADJACENT TO HERNE COURT HORN STREET FOLKESTONE

I AM GIVING NOTICE THAT The Kent County Council as Highway Authority for the County of Ken propose to make an application to the Magistrates' sitting at Canterbury Magistrates' Court on 23 May 2017 at 10:00 for an Order under Section 116 of the Highways Act 1980 to extinguish highway rights on the grounds that they are unnecessary on land adjacent to Herne Court Horn Street as shown edged red on the plan on deposit.

A copy of the draft order and the plan referred to are on deposit, and can be seen during normal office hours, at the main reception of The Kent County Council at Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XQ.

Any person to whom this Notice has been given or who uses the highway specified or who would be aggrieved by the making of the Order may appear before the Magistrates' Court to raise an objection or make a representation on the application. Any person intending to appear before the Magistrates' Court at the hearing of the application is requested to inform Carissa Humphreys by post to Kent Legal Services, Priory Gate, 29 Union Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1PT, by email highwaydefinitionsearches@kent.gov.uk, or by telephone 03000 416285 before 13 May 2017 quoting reference number LS/21/112049/628.

If you require further information or would like to discuss this matter, please contact Carissa Humphreys using the contact details shown above.

ROGER WILKIN
DIRECTOR OF HIGHWAYS,
TRANSPORTATION AND WASTE

LICENSING ACT 2003:
Application for Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that Kent Hospitality has applied to Canterbury City Council for the GRANT of a Premises Licence to operate the following Regulated Activities: Plays, Films, Live and Recorded Music, Performance of Dance, Sale of Alcohol (on and off the premises) from 09:00 to 23:45hrs Monday to Saturday and 09:00 to 22:45hrs on Sunday; Late Night Refreshment from 23:00 to 24:00 hrs Monday to Saturday, all at the following premises: The Wigoder Law Building, The University of Kent, Nr Eliot College, Canterbury CT2 7NS.

A register of licensing applications can be inspected at www.canterbury.gov.uk/licensing or at Council Offices, Military Road, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1YW tel. 01227 862000 by appointment with the Licensing Team between 10am and 4pm Monday to Friday.

Any person wishing to submit representations to this application must give notice in writing to the address shown above, giving in detail the grounds of objection by **26/04/2017.**

The Council will not entertain representations where the writer requests that their identity remains anonymous. Copies of all representations will be included in the papers presented to the Licensing Sub Committee and will therefore pass into the public domain. Representations must relate to one or more of the four Licensing Objectives: the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance and the protection of children from harm.

highways england

THE M20 MOTORWAY AND THE A20 TRUNK ROAD (JUNCTIONS 9 – 13)
TEMPORARY OVERNIGHT SLIP ROAD CLOSURES

Notice is hereby given that Highways England Company Limited(a) has made an Order on the M20 Motorway and the A20 Trunk Road, in the County of Kent, under section 14(1)(a) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 because works are proposed to be executed on the road.

The effect of the Order will be to authorise the overnight closure of the slip roads -

(a) leading to and from both carriageways of the M20 at the following junctions:
  (i) Junction 9 (A20);
  (ii) Junction 10 (A292/A2070);
  (iii) Junction 11 (A20/B2068); or
  (iv) Junction 12 (A20/B2064);
(b) leading to the M20 westbound and from the M20 eastbound at Junction 11a (Eurotunnel);
(c) leading to and from the M20 and A20 at Junction 13 (A259).

These measures will be in the interests of road safety to enable contractors to undertake cyclic maintenance and/or urgent repair work.

It is expected that the work will take place for approximately 2 nights for each closure every two months between 20:00 and 05:00 (maximum period).

The Order will come into force on 16 April 2017 and have a maximum duration of twelve months.

During the closures outlined above, traffic affected will be diverted via other junctions on the M20 or the A20, A260, A259 and A292. The diversion route in operation will vary depending on the closure in place.

The slip road closures and diversion routes will be clearly indicated by traffic signs throughout the works periods.

M Taylor, an Official of Highways England Company Ltd
Ref: HA/M20/35/3/2085

(a) Highways England Company Limited, (Company No 9346363). Registered Office: Bridge House, Walnut Tree Close, Guildford, Surrey, GU1 4LZ.
A company registered in England and Wales.

For enquiries, please contact the Customer Contact Centre on 0300 123 5000 or info@highwaysengland.co.uk
http://www.highways.gov.uk

Licensing Act 2003
Application for a premises licence variation

Name of Applicant: Satheeskumar Nadarajah

Premises: Halfway Newsagents 4 Minster Road Sheerness Kent, ME12 3JD

Current Licensable activities: Sale of Alcohol & Opening Hours Monday – Saturday 05:00 – 20:00 Sunday 05:00 – 17:00

Proposed Variations: Extension of hours: Sale of alcohol Mon – Sun 05:00 – 22:00

End of Consultation period:

Any objections to this application must be made in writing to The Licensing Department
Swale Borough Council
Swale House
East Street
Sittingbourne
Kent, ME10 3HT

Objections must be received within 28 days of the date of this notice.

It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application. Any person who makes a false statement is liable, on summary conviction, to a maximum fine of £5,000

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Cowdrey departs and ends dynasty

Fabian is the third generation of the family to play for Kent

Cricket

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

FAREWELL: Fabian Cowdrey has bowed out of the county club
Pictures: ADY KERRY

KENT academy graduate Fabian Cowdrey has left the county by mutual consent.

The 24-year-old came through the ranks at Canterbury and joined the professional staff in 2011 before making his first class debut in 2012.

He is the third generation of the Cowdrey family, after father Chris and grandfather Colin, to play for Kent.

"I'd like to thank all those team members and coaching staff who believed in me and offered me support in my toughest times at the club," he said. He is thought to be retiring.

"I wish all the supporters, Matt Walker and the players all the best for the future.

"It was not an easy decision for me and I am sad to be leaving Kent; but I believe for the club and for my own well-being it is the right time to leave.

"I was proud to have followed in the footsteps of my father and grandfather and play for my home county."

Cowdrey featured more in the white-ball competitions and scored seven half-centuries and took 34 wickets in 60 appearances.

He scored two half-centuries in 16 County Championship matches with the club.

Chairman of cricket Graham Johnson: "We always knew about his batting but his bowling has developed into a useful attribute in the shorter formats.

"It is sad to see him go and he leaves with our best wishes."

Elsewhere, the county's veteran bowler James Tredwell has thanked supporters at the club ahead of his testimonial year.

The Ashford-born star said: "Playing cricket was always my dream, to be given that opportunity by Kent is a huge honour and even more so to be awarded this fund-raising year.

"Other than a blip at the start of my career, I can honestly say that I have always given my all to the game I love.

"I have taken the rough with the smooth, but looking back, I don't think I could have given much more."

Kent's season starts on April 7 with a championship match at home to Gloucestershire.

Welling book place in Kent Senior Cup final

Football

WELLING United are into the final of the Kent Senior Cup after beating Chalton Athletic on penalties at Park View Road on Tuesday night.

After what has been a topsy turvey season for the Wings, the cup has proved a welcome distraction from their league campaign and victory on a dramatic evening in Bexley this week ensured a date with Dover Athletic in the final.

Chris Lewington was undoubtedly the hero making, some impressive saves during the 90 minutes - which ended in a 1-1 draw - and saving two of the four Addicks spot kicks, to see Welling make the final for the first time since 2009 and compete for the crown won by Dartford last year.

HOME: Welling's Park View Road

The League One visitors started brightly on the night, as expected, and took the lead right on half time as Chris Millar arrowed a half volley past the keeper.

In the second half, the hosts continued to come under fire but remained in the game and eventually found an equaliser through Alex Cathline.

Both sides had chances to win it late on but penalties were ultimately required to separate the teams.

Charlton went first and Lewington saved from George Lapslie before Sam Hatton put the Wings ahead.

Brandan Hanlan also saw Lewington save his effort, then Walker put Welling two ahead in the shoot out.

Chris Millar missed for the Addicks and Matt Fish spurned his chance to be the hero before Louis Michael Yamfam blazed his penalty over to send Welling through.

Sport Shorts

» Email **sports@kosmedia.co.uk** or call **Tom Pyman** on **01233653477**

Hockey prodigy Aspen receives Scotland call

STAR: Aspen Cumming

A ROCHESTER student has been selected to play hockey for Scotland in the upcoming under 18 series.

Aspen Cumming will feature in games against Wales and Switzerland in Cardiff from April 14-16.

The King's School student was selected for the Scotland training squad last October and since then has attended four training days and a two day training camp, impressing the selectors to secure her place at this first international series.

She qualifies to play thanks to her Scottish parents but in Kent she is a regular player in the King's Rochester 1st XI team and plays her club hockey at local club, Holcombe.

Mike Hebden, director of sport at the school: "Aspen is an incredibly dedicated sportswoman and a real role model within the school environment.

"We are delighted that Aspen has been rewarded for her hard work in this way and we can't wait to see her represent Scotland over the Easter holidays."

PRODIGY: Kiern Jewiss in action

Lucrative partnership for karting star Jewiss

A YOUNG driver dubbed "better than Lewis Hamilton" by his coach, has signed a lucrative sponsorship deal.

Sports agency MB Partners have agreed a multi-year sponsorship deal with FM Conway Ltd, the Dartford-based infrastructure services company, to support Harrietsham teenager, Kiern Jewiss.

This season sees the 14-year-old racing sensation departing the karting ranks as he makes the step up to the 2017 Ginetta Junior Championship.

"I am really proud to be supported by a company with such a respected reputation," Jewiss said.

"The next two years are huge for me as I look to make a lasting impact on the Ginetta Junior Championship and with FM Conway's support, this is an achievable aim."

Bromley star in NCAA Champs

A BROMLEY basketball prodigy is set to play in front of millions of fans this weekend.

Kavell Bigby-Williams will be playing in the NCAA Championship, which pits the 68 top basketball colleges in the US against one another.

The former Harris Academy Beckenham student has made the last four of the tournament with his college, the Oregon Ducks.

The hotly-tipped 6ft 11in forward has already received call ups to the England U18 and U20 squad, and is just one step away from the championship game.

Oregon will face North Carolina in the final four, which is being streamed live on ESPN Player.

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